



LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE

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'Duty, Not Happiness, is the True Object of Life.'

**WHAT COMMANDS THE ADMIRATION AND HOMAGE OF MANKIND?—CHARACTER
AND STERLING HONESTY OF PURPOSE.**

THE FATHER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

AN INCIDENT IN HIS FIRST CANVASS.

'TELL 'IM TO CHALK HIS NAME ON THE COUNTER, AND YOUR FATHER SHALL ASK HIS CHARACTER.'

"If I were asked to account in a sentence for his great popularity, I should say it was his great urbanity, his fidelity to true Liberalism, his love of independence, and his unimpeachable character. During his first canvass (about 60 years ago), Mr. Villiers and two friends entered a small shop at Willenhall that had been left in charge of a young girl. On learning their business the damsel shouted upstairs, "Mother, here's a gentleman as is come for father's vote for Member of Parliament." To this a voice from above made answer, "Tell 'im to chalk his name on the counter, and your FATHER SHALL ASK HIS CHARACTER." "Thank you, Ma'am," shouted the candidate; after which, turning to his companions, he said, "Book that for me, I am as certain of it as if it were already given."—*Newcastle Chronicle*.



'BOOK THAT FOR ME.'

very least, if not my life itself. Heartfelt gratitude for my restoration impels me to add my testimony to the already overwhelming store of the same, and in so doing I feel that I am but obeying the dictates of duty

'Gratefully yours, A CORPORAL, 19th Hussars.—26th May, 1883.'

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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

JUNE 1893.

A Gentleman of France:

BEING THE MEMOIRS OF GASTON DE BONNE,
SIEUR DE MARSAC.

BY STANLEY J. WEYMAN.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE KING'S CHAMBER.

M. DE ROSNY had risen from my side and started on his journey when I opened my eyes in the morning, and awoke to the memory of the task which had been so strangely imposed upon me; and which might, according as the events of the next fortnight shaped themselves, raise me to high position or put an end to my career. He had not forgotten to leave a souvenir behind him, for I found beside my pillow a handsome silver-mounted pistol, bearing the letter 'R.' and a coronet; nor had I more than discovered this instance of his kindness before Simon Fleix came in to tell me that M. de Rosny had left two hundred crowns in his hands for me.

'Any message with it?' I asked the lad.

'Only that he had taken a keepsake in exchange,' Simon answered, opening the window as he spoke.

In some wonder I began to search, but I could not discover that anything was missing until I came to put on my doublet, when I found that the knot of ribbon which mademoiselle had flung to me at my departure from Rosny was gone from the inside of the

breast, where I had pinned it for safety with a long thorn. The discovery that M. de Rosny had taken this was displeasing to me on more than one account. In the first place, whether mademoiselle had merely wished to plague me (as was most probable) or not, I was loth to lose it, my day for ladies' favours being past and gone; in the second, I misdoubted the motive which had led him to purloin it, and tormented myself with thinking of the different constructions he might put upon it, and the disparaging view of my trustworthiness which it might lead him to take. I blamed myself much for my carelessness in leaving it where a chance eye might rest upon it; and more when, questioning Simon further, I learned that M. de Rosny had added, while mounting at the door, 'Tell your master, safe bind, safe find; and a careless lover makes a loose mistress.'

I felt my cheek burn in a manner unbecoming my years while Simon with some touch of malice repeated this; and I made a vow on the spot, which I kept until I was tempted to break it, to have no more to do with such trifles. Meanwhile, I had to make the best of it; and brisking up, and bidding Simon, who seemed depressed by the baron's departure, brisk up also, I set about my preparations for making such a figure at Court as became me: procuring a black velvet suit, and a cap and feather to match; item, a jewelled clasp to secure the feather; with a yard or two of lace and two changes of fine linen.

Simon had grown sleek at Rosny, and losing something of the wildness which had marked him, presented in the dress M. de Rosny had given him a very creditable appearance; being also, I fancy, the only equerry in Blois who could write. A groom I engaged on the recommendation of M. de Rambouillet's master of the horse; and I gave out also that I required a couple of valets. It needed only an hour under the barber's hands and a set of new trappings for the Cid to enable me to make a fair show, such as might be taken to indicate a man of ten or twelve thousand livres a year.

In this way I expended a hundred and fifteen crowns. Reflecting that this was a large sum, and that I must keep some money for play, I was glad to learn that in the crowded state of the city even men of high rank were putting up with poor lodging; I determined, therefore, to combine economy with a scheme which I had in my head by taking the rooms in which my mother died, with one room below them. This I did, hiring such furniture as I needed, which was not a great deal. To Simon Fleix, whose assistance in these matters was invaluable, I passed on much of M.

de Rosny's advice, bidding him ruffle it with the best in his station, and inciting him to labour for my advancement by promising to make his fortune whenever my own should be assured. I hoped, indeed, to derive no little advantage from the quickness of wit which had attracted M. de Rosny's attention; although I did not fail to take into account at the same time that the lad was wayward and fitful, prone at one time to depression, and at another to giddiness, and equally uncertain in either mood.

M. de Rambouillet being unable to attend the *levée*, had appointed me to wait upon him at six in the evening; at which hour I presented myself at his lodgings, attended by Simon Fleix. I found him in the midst of half a dozen gentlemen whose habit it was to attend him upon all public occasions; and these gallants, greeting me with the same curious and suspicious glances which I have seen hounds bestow on a strange dog introduced into their kennel, I was speedily made to feel that it is one thing to have business at Court, and another to be well received there.

M. de Rambouillet, somewhat to my surprise, did nothing to remove this impression. On all ordinary occasions a man of stiff and haughty bearing, and thoroughly disliking, though he could not prevent, the intrusion of a third party into a transaction which promised an infinity of credit, he received me so coldly and with so much reserve as for the moment to dash my spirits and throw me back on myself.

During the journey to the castle, however, which we performed on foot, attended by half a dozen armed servants bearing torches, I had time to recall M. de Rosny's advice, and to bethink me of the intimacy which that great man had permitted me; with so much effect in the way of heartening me, that as we crossed the courtyard of the castle I advanced myself, not without some murmuring on the part of others, to Rambouillet's elbow, considering that as I was attached to him by the king's command, this was my proper place. I had no desire to quarrel, however, and persisted for some time in disregarding the nudges and muttered words which were exchanged round me, and even the efforts which were made as we mounted the stairs to oust me from my position. But a young gentleman, who showed himself very forward in these attempts, presently stumbling against me, I found it necessary to look at him.

'Sir,' he said, in a small and lisping voice, 'you trod on my toe.'

Though I had not done so, I begged his pardon very politely. But as his only acknowledgment of this courtesy consisted in

an attempt to get his knee in front of mine—we were mounting very slowly, the stairs being cumbered with a multitude of servants, who stood on either hand—I did tread on his toe, with a force and directness which made him cry out.

‘What is the matter?’ Rambouillet asked, looking back hastily.

‘Nothing, M. le Marquis,’ I answered, pressing on steadfastly.

‘Sir,’ my young friend said again, in the same lisping voice, ‘you trod on my toe.’

‘I believe I did, sir,’ I answered.

‘You have not yet apologised,’ he murmured gently in my ear.

‘Nay, there you are wrong,’ I rejoined bluntly, ‘for it is always my habit to apologise first and tread afterwards.’

He smiled as at a pleasant joke; and I am bound to say that his bearing was so admirable that if he had been my son I could have hugged him. ‘Good!’ he answered. ‘No doubt your sword is as sharp as your wits, sir. I see,’ he continued, glancing naïvely at my old scabbard—he was himself the very gem of a courtier, a slender youth with a pink-and-white complexion, a dark line for a moustache, and a pearl-drop in his ear—‘it is long-ing to be out. Perhaps you will take a turn in the tennis-court to-morrow?’

‘With pleasure, sir,’ I answered, ‘if you have a father, or your elder brother is grown up.’

What answer he would have made to this gibe I do not know, for at that moment we reached the door of the ante-chamber; and this being narrow, and a sentry in the grey uniform of the Swiss Guard compelling all to enter in single file, my young friend was forced to fall back, leaving me free to enter alone, and admire at my leisure a scene at once brilliant and sombre.

The Court being in mourning for the Queen-mother, black predominated in the dresses of those present, and set off very finely the gleaming jewels and gemmed sword-hilts which were worn by the more important personages. The room was spacious and lofty, hung with arras, and lit by candles burning in silver sconces; it rang as we entered with the shrill screaming of a parrot, which was being teased by a group occupying the farther of the two hearths. Near them play was going on at one table, and primero at a second. In a corner were three or four ladies, in a circle about a red-faced, plebeian-looking man, who was playing at forfeits with one of their number; while the middle of the room seemed dominated by a middle-sized man with a peculiarly inflamed and passionate countenance, who, seated on a table, was inveighing against some-

one or something in the most violent terms, his language being interlarded with all kinds of strange and forcible oaths. Two or three gentlemen, who had the air of being his followers, stood about him, listening between submission and embarrassment; while beside the nearer fireplace, but at some distance from him, lounged a nobleman, very richly dressed, and wearing on his breast the Cross of the Holy Ghost; who seemed to be the object of his invective, but affecting to ignore it was engaged in conversation with a companion. A bystander muttering that Crillon had been drinking, I discovered with immense surprise that the declaimer on the table was that famous soldier; and I was still looking at him in wonder—for I had been accustomed all my life to associate courage with modesty—when, the door of the chamber suddenly opening, a general movement in that direction took place. Crillon, disregarding all precedence, sprang from his table and hurried first to the threshold. The Baron de Biron, on the other hand—for the gentleman by the fire was no other—waited, in apparent ignorance of the slight which was being put upon him, until M. de Rambouillet came up; then he went forward with him. Keeping close to my patron's elbow, I entered the chamber immediately behind him.

Crillon had already seized upon the king, and, when we entered, was stating his grievance in a voice not much lower than that which he had used outside. M. de Biron, seeing this, parted from the marquis, and, going aside with his former companion, sat down on a trunk against the wall; while Rambouillet, followed by myself and three or four gentlemen of his train, advanced to the king, who was standing near the alcove. His Majesty seeing him, and thankful, I think, for the excuse, waved Crillon off. 'Tut, tut! You told me all that this morning,' he said good-naturedly. 'And here is Rambouillet, who has, I hope, something fresh to tell. Let him speak to me. Sanctus! Don't look at me as if you would run me through, man. Go and quarrel with someone of your own size.'

Crillon at this retired grumbling, and Henry, who had just risen from primero with the Duke of Nevers, nodded to Rambouillet. 'Well, my friend, anything fresh?' he cried. He was more at his ease and looked more cheerful than at our former interview; yet still care and suspicion lurked about his peevish mouth, and in the hollows under his gloomy eyes. 'A new guest, a new face, or a new game—which have you brought?'

'In a sense, sire, a new face,' the marquis answered, bowing, and standing somewhat aside that I might have place.

'Well, I cannot say much for the pretty baggage,' quoth the king quickly. And amid a general titter he extended his hand to me. 'I'll be sworn, though,' he continued, as I rose from my knee, 'that you want something, my friend?'

'Nay, sire,' I answered, holding up my head boldly—for Crillon's behaviour had been a further lesson to me—'I have, by your leave, the advantage. For your Majesty has supplied me with a new jest. I see many new faces round me, and I have need only of a new game. If your Majesty would be pleased to grant me——'

'There! Said I not so?' cried the king, raising his hand with a laugh. 'He does want something. But he seems not undeserving. What does he pray, Rambouillet?'

'A small command,' M. de Rambouillet answered, readily playing his part. 'And your Majesty would oblige me if you could grant the Sieur de Marsac's petition. I will answer for it he is a man of experience.'

'Chut! A small command?' Henry ejaculated, sitting down suddenly in apparent ill-humour. 'It is what everyone wants—when they do not want big ones. Still, I suppose,' he continued, taking up a comfit-box, which lay beside him, and opening it, 'if you do not get what you want for him you will sulk like the rest, my friend.'

'Your Majesty has never had cause to complain of me,' quoth the marquis, forgetting his rôle, or too proud to play it.

'Tut, tut, tut, tut! Take it, and trouble me no more,' the king rejoined. 'Will pay for twenty men do for him? Very well then. There, M. de Marsac,' he continued, nodding at me and yawning, 'your request is granted. You will find some other pretty baggages over there. Go to them. And now, Rambouillet,' he went on, resuming his spirits as he turned to matters of more importance, 'here is a new sweetmeat Zamet has sent me. I have made Zizi sick with it. Will you try it? It is flavoured with white mulberries.'

Thus dismissed, I fell back; and stood for a moment, at a loss whither to turn, in the absence of either friends or acquaintances. His Majesty, it is true, had bidden me go to certain pretty baggages, meaning, apparently, five ladies who were seated at the farther end of the room, diverting themselves with as many cavaliers; but the compactness of this party, the beauty of the ladies, and the merry peals of laughter which proceeded from them, telling of a wit and vivacity beyond the ordinary, sapped

the resolution which had borne me well hitherto. I felt that to attack such a phalanx, even with the king's good will, was beyond the daring of a Crillon, and I looked round to see whether I could not amuse myself in some more modest fashion.

The material was not lacking. Crillon, still mouthing out his anger, strode up and down in front of the trunk on which M. de Biron was seated; but the latter was, or affected to be, asleep. 'Crillon is for ever going into rages now,' a courtier beside me whispered.

'Yes,' his fellow answered, with a shrug of the shoulder; 'it is a pity there is no one to tame him. But he has such a long reach, morbleu!'

'It is not that so much as the fellow's fury,' the first speaker rejoined under his breath. 'He fights like a mad thing; fencing is no use against him.'

The other nodded. For a moment the wild idea of winning renown by taming M. de Crillon occurred to me as I stood alone in the middle of the floor; but it had not more than passed through my brain when I felt my elbow touched, and turned to find the young gentleman whom I had encountered on the stairs standing by my side.

'Sir,' he lisped, in the same small voice, 'I think you trod on my toe a while ago?'

I stared at him, wondering what he meant by this absurd repetition. 'Well, sir,' I answered drily, 'and if I did?'

'Perhaps,' he said, stroking his chin with his jewelled fingers, 'pending our meeting to-morrow, you would allow me to consider it as a kind of introduction?'

'If it please you,' I answered, bowing stiffly, and wondering what he would be at.

'Thank you,' he answered. 'It does please me, under the circumstances; for there is a lady here who desires a word with you. I took up her challenge. Will you follow me?'

He bowed, and turned in his languid fashion. I, turning too, saw, with secret dismay, that the five ladies, referred to above, were all now gazing at me, as expecting my approach; and this with such sportive glances as told only too certainly of some plot already in progress or some trick to be presently played me. Yet I could not see that I had any choice save to obey, and, following my leader with as much dignity as I could compass, I presently found myself bowing before the lady who sat nearest, and who seemed to be the leader of these nymphs.

'Nay, sir,' she said, eyeing me curiously, yet with a merry face, 'I do not need you; I do not look so high!'

Turning in confusion to the next, I was surprised to see before me the lady whose lodging I had invaded in my search for Made-moiselle de la Vire—she, I mean, who, having picked up the velvet knot, had dropped it so providentially where Simon Fleix found it. She looked at me, blushing and laughing, and the young gentleman, who had done her errand, presenting me by name, she asked me, while the others listened, whether I had found my mistress.

Before I could answer, the lady to whom I had first addressed myself interposed. 'Stop, sir!' she cried. 'What is this—a tale, a jest, a game, or a forfeit?'

'An adventure, madam,' I answered, bowing low.

'Of gallantry, I'll be bound,' she exclaimed. 'Fie, Madame de Bruhl, and you but six months married!'

Madame de Bruhl protested, laughing, that she had no more to do with it than Mercury. 'At the worst,' she said, 'I carried the *poulets*! But I can assure you, duchess, this gentleman should be able to tell us a very fine story, if he would.'

The duchess and all the other ladies clapping their hands at this, and crying out that the story must and should be told, I found myself in a prodigious quandary; and one wherein my wits derived as little assistance as possible from the bright eyes and saucy looks which environed me. Moreover, the commotion attracting other listeners, I found my position, while I tried to extricate myself, growing each moment worse, so that I began to fear that as I had little imagination I should perforce have to tell the truth. The mere thought of this threw me into a cold perspiration, lest I should let slip something of consequence, and prove myself unworthy of the trust which M. de Rosny had reposed in me.

At the moment when, despairing of extricating myself, I was stooping over Madame de Bruhl begging her to assist me, I heard, amid the babel of laughter and raillery which surrounded me—certain of the courtiers having already formed hands in a circle and sworn I should not depart without satisfying the ladies—a voice which struck a chord in my memory. I turned to see who the speaker was, and encountered no other than M. de Bruhl himself; who, with a flushed and angry face, was listening to the explanation which a friend was pouring into his ear. Standing at the moment with my knee on Madame de Bruhl's stool, and remembering very well the meeting on the stairs, I conceived in a flash

that the man was jealous; but whether he had yet heard my name, or had any clew to link me with the person who had rescued Mademoiselle de la Vire from his clutches, I could not tell. Nevertheless his presence led my thoughts into a new channel. The determination to punish him began to take form in my mind, and very quickly I regained my composure. Still I was for giving him one chance. Accordingly I stooped once more to Madame de Bruhl's ear, and begged her to spare me the embarrassment of telling my tale. But then, finding her pitiless, as I expected, and the rest of the company growing more and more insistent, I hardened my heart to go through with the fantastic notion which had occurred to me.

Indicating by a gesture that I was prepared to obey, and the duchess crying for a hearing, this was presently obtained, the sudden silence adding the king himself to my audience. 'What is it?' he asked, coming up effusively, with a lap-dog in his arms. 'A new scandal, eh?'

'No, sire, a new tale-teller,' the duchess answered pertly. 'If your Majesty will sit, we shall hear him the sooner.'

He pinched her ear and sat down in the chair which a page presented. 'What? is it Rambouillet's *grison* again?' he said with some surprise. 'Well, fire away, man. But who brought you forward as a Rabelais?'

There was a general cry of 'Madame de Bruhl!' whereat that lady shook her fair hair about her face, and cried out for someone to bring her a mask.

'Ha, I see!' said the king drily, looking pointedly at M. de Bruhl, who was as black as thunder. 'But go on, man.'

The king's advent, by affording me a brief respite, had enabled me to collect my thoughts, and, disregarding the ribald interruptions, which at first were frequent, I began as follows: 'I am no Rabelais, sire,' I said, 'but droll things happen to the most unlikely. Once upon a time it was the fortune of a certain swain, whom I will call Dromio, to arrive in a town not a hundred miles from Blois, having in his company a nymph of great beauty, who had been entrusted to his care by her parents. He had not more than lodged her in his apartments, however, before she was decoyed away by a trick, and borne off against her will by a young gallant, who had seen her and been smitten by her charms. Dromio, returning, and finding his mistress gone, gave way to the most poignant grief. He ran up and down the city, seeking her in every place, and filling all places with his lamentations; but for a time in vain,

until chance led him to a certain street, where, in an almost incredible manner, he found a clue to her by discovering underfoot a knot of velvet, bearing Phyllida's name wrought on it in delicate needlework, with the words, "A moi!"

'Sanctus!' cried the king, amid a general murmur of surprise, 'that is well devised! Proceed, sir. Go on like that, and we will make your twenty men twenty-five.'

'Dromio,' I continued, 'at sight of this trifle experienced the most diverse emotions, for while he possessed in it a clue to his mistress's fate, he had still to use it so as to discover the place whither she had been hurried. It occurred to him at last to begin his search with the house before which the knot had lain. Ascending accordingly to the second-floor, he found there a fair lady reclining on a couch, who started up in affright at his appearance. He hastened to reassure her, and to explain the purpose of his coming, and learned after a conversation with which I will not trouble your Majesty, though it was sufficiently diverting, that the lady had found the velvet knot in another part of the town, and had herself dropped it again in front of her own house.'

'Pourquoi?' the king asked, interrupting me.

'The swain, sire,' I answered, 'was too much taken up with his own troubles to bear that in mind, even if he learned it. But this delicacy did not save him from misconception, for as he descended from the lady's apartment he met her husband on the stairs.'

'Good!' the king exclaimed, rubbing his hands in glee. 'The husband!' And under cover of the gibe and the courtly laugh which followed it M. de Bruhl's start of surprise passed unnoticed save by me.

'The husband,' I resumed, 'seeing a stranger descending his staircase, was for stopping him and learning the reason of his presence; but Dromio, whose mind was with Phyllida, refused to stop, and, evading his questions, hurried to the part of the town where the lady had told him she found the velvet knot. Here, sire, at the corner of a lane running between garden-walls, he found a great house, barred and gloomy, and well adapted to the abductor's purpose. Moreover, scanning it on every side, he presently discovered, tied about the bars of an upper window, a knot of white linen, the very counterpart of that velvet one which he bore in his breast. Thus he knew that the nymph was imprisoned in that room!'

'I will make it twenty-five, as I am a good Churchman!' his Majesty exclaimed, dropping the little dog he was nursing into the duchess's lap, and taking out his comfit-box. 'Rambouillet,' he added languidly, 'your friend is a treasure!'

I bowed my acknowledgments, and took occasion as I did so to step a pace aside, so as to command a view of Madame de Bruhl, as well as her husband. Hitherto madame, willing to be accounted a part in so pretty a romance, and ready enough also, unless I was mistaken, to cause her husband a little mild jealousy, had listened to the story with a certain sly demureness. But this I foresaw would not last long; and I felt something like compunction as the moment for striking the blow approached. But I had now no choice. 'The best is yet to come, sire,' I went on, 'as I think you will acknowledge in a moment. Dromio, though he had discovered his mistress, was still in the depths of despair. He wandered round and round the house, seeking ingress and finding none, until at length, sunset approaching, and darkness redoubling his fears for the nymph, fortune took pity on him. As he stood in front of the house he saw the abductor come out, lighted by two servants. Judge of his surprise, sire,' I continued, looking round and speaking slowly, to give full effect to my words, 'when he recognised in him no other than the husband of the lady who, by picking up and again dropping the velvet knot, had contributed so much to the success of his search!'

'Ha! these husbands!' cried the king. And slapping his knee in an ecstasy at his own acuteness, he laughed in his seat till he rolled again. 'These husbands! Did I not say so?'

The whole Court gave way to like applause, and clapped their hands as well, so that few save those who stood nearest took notice of Madame de Bruhl's faint cry, and still fewer understood why she rose up suddenly from her stool and stood gazing at her husband with burning cheeks and clenched hands. She took no heed of me, much less of the laughing crowd round her, but looked only at him with her soul in her eyes. He, after uttering one hoarse curse, seemed to have no thought for any but me. To have the knowledge that his own wife had balked him brought home to him in this mocking fashion, to find how little a thing had tripped him that day, to learn how blindly he had played into the hands of fate, above all to be exposed at once to his wife's resentment and the ridicule of the Court—for he could not be sure that I should not the next moment

disclose his name—all so wrought on him that for a moment I thought he would strike me in the presence.

His rage, indeed, did what I had not meant to do. For the king, catching sight of his face, and remembering that Madame de Bruhl had elicited the story, screamed suddenly, 'Haro!' and pointed ruthlessly at him with his finger. After that I had no need to speak, the story leaping from eye to eye, and every eye settling on Bruhl, who sought in vain to compose his features. Madame, who surpassed him, as women commonly do surpass men, in self-control, was the first to recover herself, and sitting down as quickly as she had risen, confronted alike her husband and her rivals with a pale smile.

For a moment curiosity and excitement kept all breathless, the eye alone busy. Then the king laughed mischievously. 'Come M. de Bruhl,' he cried, 'perhaps you will finish the tale for us?' And he threw himself back in his chair, a sneer on his lips.

'Or why not Madame de Bruhl?' said the duchess, with her head on one side and her eyes glittering over her fan. 'Madame would, I am sure, tell it so well.'

But madame only shook her head, smiling always that forced smile. For Bruhl himself, glaring from face to face like a bull about to charge, I have never seen a man more out of countenance, or more completely brought to bay. His discomposure, exposed as he was to the ridicule of all present, was such that the presence in which he stood scarcely hindered him from some violent attack; and his eyes, which had wandered from me at the king's word, presently returning to me again, he so far forgot himself as to raise his hand furiously, uttering at the same time a savage oath.

The king cried out angrily, 'Have a care, sir!' But Bruhl only heeded this so far as to thrust aside those who stood round him and push his way hurriedly through the circle.

'Arnidieu!' cried the king, when he was gone. 'This is fine conduct! I have half a mind to send after him and have him put where his hot blood would cool a little. Or——'

He stopped abruptly, his eyes resting on me. The relative positions of Bruhl and myself as the agents of Rosny and Turenne occurred to him for the first time, I think, and suggested the idea, perhaps, that I had laid a trap for him, and that he had fallen into it. At any rate his face grew darker and darker, and at last, 'A nice kettle of fish this is you have prepared for us, sir!' he muttered, gazing at me gloomily.

The sudden change in his humour took even courtiers by surprise. Faces a moment before broad with smiles grew long again. The less important personages looked uncomfortably at one another, and with one accord frowned on me. 'If your Majesty would please to hear the end of the story at another time?' I suggested humbly, beginning to wish with all my heart that I had never said a word.

'Chut!' he answered, rising, his face still betraying his perturbation. 'Well, be it so. For the present you may go, sir. Duchess, give me Zizi, and come to my closet. I want you to see my puppies. Retz, my good friend, do you come too. I have something to say to you. Gentlemen, you need not wait. It is likely I shall be late.'

And, with the utmost abruptness, he broke up the circle.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE JACOBIN MONK.

HAD I needed any reminder of the uncertainty of Court favour, or an instance whence I might learn the lesson of modesty, and so stand in less danger of presuming on my new and precarious prosperity, I had it in this episode, and in the demeanour of the company round me. On the circle breaking up in confusion, I found myself the centre of general regard, but regard of so dubious a character, the persons who would have been the first to compliment me had the king retired earlier, standing farthest aloof now, that I felt myself rather insulted than honoured by it. One or two, indeed, of the more cautious spirits did approach me; but it was with the air of men providing against a danger particularly remote, their half-hearted speeches serving only to fix them in my memory as belonging to a class, especially abhorrent to me—the class, I mean, of those who would run at once with the hare and the hounds.

I was rejoiced to find that on one person, and that the one whose disposition towards me was, next to the king's, of first importance, this episode had produced a different impression. Feeling, as I made for the door, a touch on my arm, I turned to find M. de Rambouillet at my elbow, regarding me with a glance of mingled esteem and amusement; in fine, with a very different look from that which had been my welcome earlier in

the evening. I was driven to suppose that he was too great a man, or too sure of his favour with the king, to be swayed by the petty motives which actuated the Court generally, for he laid his hand familiarly on my shoulder, and walked on beside me.

'Well, my friend,' he said, 'you have distinguished yourself finely! I do not know that I ever remember a pretty woman making more stir in one evening. But if you are wise you will not go home alone to-night.'

'I have my sword, M. le Marquis,' I answered, somewhat proudly.

'Which will avail you little against a knife in the back!' he retorted drily. 'What attendance have you?'

'My equerry, Simon Fleix, is on the stairs.'

'Good, so far, but not enough,' he replied, as we reached the head of the staircase. 'You had better come home with me now, and two or three of my fellows shall go on to your lodging with you. Do you know, my friend,' he continued, looking at me keenly, 'you are either a very clever or a very foolish man?'

I made answer modestly. 'Neither the one, I fear, nor the other, I hope, sir,' I said.

'Well, you have done a very pertinent thing,' he replied, 'for good or evil. You have let the enemy know what he has to expect, and he is not one, I warn you, to be despised. But whether you have been very wise or very foolish in declaring open war remains to be seen.'

'A week will show,' I answered.

He turned and looked at me. 'You take it coolly,' he said.

'I have been knocking about the world for forty years, marquis,' I rejoined.

He muttered something about Rosny having a good eye, and then stopped to adjust his cloak. We were by this time in the street. Making me go hand in hand with him, he requested the other gentlemen to draw their swords; and the servants being likewise armed and numbering half a score or more, with pikes and torches, we made up a very formidable party, and caused, I think, more alarm as we passed through the streets to Rambouillet's lodging than we had any reason to feel. Not that we had it all to ourselves, for the attendance at Court that evening being large, and the circle breaking up as I have described more abruptly than usual, the vicinity of the castle was in a ferment, and the streets leading from it were alive with the lights and laughter of parties similar to our own.

At the door of the marquis's lodging I prepared to take leave of him with many expressions of gratitude, but he would have me enter and sit down with him to a light refection, which it was his habit to take before retiring. Two of his gentlemen sat down with us, and a valet, who was in his confidence, waiting on us, we made very merry over the scene in the presence. I learned that M. de Bruhl was far from popular at Court; but being known to possess some kind of hold over the king, and enjoying besides a great reputation for recklessness and skill with the sword, he had played a high part for a length of time, and attached to himself, especially since the death of Guise, a considerable number of followers.

'The truth is,' one of the marquis's gentlemen, who was a little heated with wine, observed, 'there is nothing at this moment which a bold and unscrupulous man may not win in France!'

'Nor a bold and Christian gentleman for France!' replied M. de Rambouillet with some asperity. 'By the way,' he continued, turning abruptly to the servant, 'where is M. François?'

The valet answered that he had not returned with us from the castle. The Marquis expressed himself annoyed at this, and I gathered, firstly, that the missing man was his near kinsman, and, secondly, that he was also the young spark who had been so forward to quarrel with me earlier in the evening. Determining to refer the matter, should it become pressing, to Rambouillet for adjustment, I took leave of him, and attended by two of his servants, whom he kindly transferred to my service for the present, I started towards my lodging a little before midnight.

The moon had risen while we were at supper, and its light, which whitened the gables on one side of the street, diffused a glimmer below sufficient to enable us to avoid the kennel. Seeing this, I bade the men put out our torch. Frost had set in, and a keen wind was blowing, so that we were glad to hurry on at a good pace; and the streets being quite deserted at this late hour, or haunted only by those who had come to dread the town marshal, we met no one and saw no lights. I fell to thinking, for my part, of the evening I had spent searching Blois for Made-moiselle, and of the difference between then and now. Nor did I fail while on this track to retrace it still farther to the evening of our arrival at my mother's; whence, as a source, such kindly and gentle thoughts welled up in my mind as were natural, and the unfailing affection of that gracious woman required. These, taking the place for the moment of the anxious calculations and

stern purposes which had of late engrossed me, were only ousted by something which, happening under my eyes, brought me violently and abruptly to myself.

This was the sudden appearance of three men, who issued one by one from an alley a score of yards in front of us, and after pausing a second to look back the way they had come, flitted on in single file along the street, disappearing, as far as the darkness permitted me to judge, round a second corner. I by no means liked their appearance, and as a scream and the clash of arms rang out next moment from the direction in which they had gone, I cried lustily to Simon Fleix to follow, and ran on, believing from the rascals' movements that they were after no good, but that rather some honest man was like to be sore beset.

On reaching the lane down which they had plunged, however, I paused a moment, considering not so much its blackness, which was intense, the eaves nearly meeting overhead, as the small chance I had of distinguishing between attackers and attacked. But Simon and the men overtaking me, and the sounds of a sharp tussle still continuing, I decided to venture, and plunged into the alley, my left arm well advanced, with the skirt of my cloak thrown over it, and my sword drawn back. I shouted as I ran, thinking that the knaves might desist on hearing me; and this was what happened, for as I arrived on the scene of action—the farther end of the alley—two men took to their heels, while of two who remained, one lay at length in the kennel, and another rose slowly from his knees.

'You are just in time, sir,' the latter said, breathing hard, but speaking with a preciseness which sounded familiar. 'I am obliged to you, sir, whoever you are. The villains had got me down, and in a few minutes more would have made my mother childless. By the way, you have no light, have you?' he continued, lisping like a woman.

One of M. de Rambouillet's men, who had by this time come up, cried out that it was Monsieur François.

'Yes, blockhead!' the young gentleman answered with the utmost coolness. 'But I asked for a light, not for my name.'

'I trust you are not hurt, sir?' I said, putting up my sword.

'Scratched only,' he answered, betraying no surprise on learning who it was had come up so opportunely; as he no doubt did learn from my voice, for he continued with a bow, 'A slight price to pay for the knowledge that M. de Marsac is as forward on the field as on the stairs.'

I bowed my acknowledgments.

'This fellow,' I said, 'is he much hurt?'

'Tut, tut! I thought I had saved the marshal all trouble,' M. François replied. 'Is he not dead, Gil?'

The poor wretch made answer for himself, crying out piteously and in a choking voice, for a priest to shrive him. At that moment Simon Fleix returned with our torch, which he had lighted at the nearest cross-streets, where there was a brazier, and we saw by this light that the man was coughing up blood, and might live perhaps half an hour.

'Mordieu! That comes of thrusting too high!' M. François muttered, regretfully. 'An inch lower, and there would have been none of this trouble! I suppose somebody must fetch one. Gil,' he continued, 'run, man, to the sacristy in the Rue St. Denys, and get a Father. Or—stay! Help to lift him under the lee of the wall there. The wind cuts like a knife here.'

The street being on the slope of the hill, the lower part of the house nearest us stood a few feet from the ground, on wooden piles, and the space underneath it, being enclosed at the back and sides, was used as a cart-house. The servants moved the dying man into this rude shelter, and I accompanied them, being unwilling to leave the young gentleman alone. Not wishing, however, to seem to interfere, I walked to the farther end, and sat down on the shaft of a cart, whence I idly admired the strange aspect of the group I had left, as the glare of the torch brought now one and now another into prominence, and sometimes shone on M. François' jewelled fingers toying with his tiny moustache, and sometimes on the writhing features of the man at his feet.

On a sudden, and before Gil had started on his errand, I saw there was a priest among them. I had not seen him enter, nor had I any idea whence he came. My first impression was only that here was a priest, and that he was looking at me—not at the man craving his assistance on the floor, or at those who stood round him, but at me, who sat away in the shadow beyond the ring of light!

This was surprising; but a second glance explained it, for then I saw that he was the Jacobin monk who had haunted my mother's dying hours. And, amazed as much at this strange *rencontre* as at the man's boldness, I sprang up and strode forwards, forgetting, in an impulse of righteous anger, the office he came to do. And this the more as his face, still turned to me, seemed instinct to my eyes with triumphant malice. As I moved towards

him, however, with a fierce exclamation on my lips, he suddenly dropped his eyes and knelt. Immediately M. François cried 'Hush!' and the men turned to me with scandalised faces. I fell back. Yet even then, whispering on his knees by the dying man, the knave was thinking, I felt sure, of me, glorying at once in his immunity and the power it gave him to tantalise me without fear.

I determined, whatever the result, to intercept him when all was over; and on the man dying a few minutes later, I walked resolutely to the open side of the shed, thinking it likely he might try to slip away as mysteriously as he had come. He stood a moment speaking to M. François, however, and then, accompanied by him, advanced boldly to meet me, a lean smile on his face.

'Father Antoine,' M. François said politely, 'tells me that he knows you, M. de Marsac, and desires to speak to you, *mal-à-propos* as is the occasion.'

'And I to him,' I answered, trembling with rage, and only restraining by an effort the impulse which would have had me dash my hand in the priest's pale, smirking face. 'I have waited long for this moment,' I continued, eyeing him steadily, as M. François withdrew out of hearing, 'and had you tried to avoid me, I would have dragged you back, though all your tribe were here to protect you.'

His presence so maddened me that I scarcely knew what I said. I felt my breath come quickly, I felt the blood surge to my head, and it was with difficulty I restrained myself when he answered with well-affected sanctity, 'Like mother, like son, I fear, sir. Huguenots both.'

I choked with rage. 'What!' I said, 'you dare to threaten me as you threatened my mother? Fool! know that only to-day for the purpose of discovering and punishing you I took the rooms in which my mother died.'

'I know it,' he answered quietly. And then in a second, as by magic, he altered his demeanour completely, raising his head and looking me in the face. 'That, and so much besides, I know,' he continued, giving me, to my astonishment, frown for frown, 'that if you will listen to me for a moment, M. de Marsac, and listen quietly. I will convince you that the folly is not on my side.'

Amazed at his new manner, in which there was none of the madness that had marked him at our first meeting, but a strange air of authority, unlike anything I had associated with him before, I signed to him to proceed.

'You think that I am in your power?' he said, smiling.

'I think,' I retorted swiftly, 'that, escaping me now, you will have at your heels henceforth a worse enemy than even your own sins.'

'Just so,' he answered, nodding. 'Well, I am going to show you that the reverse is the case; and that you are as completely in my hands, to spare or to break, as this straw. In the first place, you are here in Blois, a Huguenot!'

'Chut!' I exclaimed contemptuously, affecting a confidence I was far from feeling. 'A little while back that might have availed you. But we are in Blois, not Paris. It is not far to the Loire, and you have to deal with a man now, not with a woman. It is you who have cause to tremble, not I.'

'You think to be protected,' he answered with a sour smile, 'even on this side of the Loire, I see. But one word to the Pope's Legate, or to the Duke of Nevers, and you would see the inside of a dungeon, if not worse. For the king——'

'King or no king!' I answered, interrupting him with more assurance than I felt, seeing that I remembered only too well Henry's remark that Rosny must not look to him for protection, 'I fear you not a whit! And that reminds me. I have heard you talk treason—rank, black treason, priest, as ever sent man to rope, and I will give you up. By heaven I will!' I cried, my rage increasing, as I discerned, more and more clearly, the dangerous hold he had over me. 'You have threatened me! One word, and I will send you to the gallows!'

'Sh!' he answered, indicating M. François by a gesture of the hand. 'For your own sake, not mine. This is fine talking, but you have not yet heard all I know. Would you like to hear how you have spent the last month? Two days after Christmas, M. de Marsac, you left Chizé with a young lady—I can give you her name, if you please. Four days afterwards you reached Blois, and took her to your mother's lodging. Next morning she left you for M. de Bruhl. Two days later you tracked her to a house in the Ruelle d'Arcy, and freed her, but lost her in the moment of victory. Then you stayed in Blois until your mother's death, going a day or two later to M. de Rosny's house by Mantes, where mademoiselle still is. Yesterday you arrived in Blois with M. de Rosny; you went to his lodging; you——'

'Proceed, sir,' I muttered, leaning forward. Under cover of my cloak I drew my dagger half-way from its sheath. 'Proceed, sir, I pray,' I repeated with dry lips.

'You slept there,' he continued, holding his ground, but shuddering slightly, either from cold or because he perceived my movement and read my design in my eyes. 'This morning you remained here in attendance on M. de Rambouillet.'

For the moment I breathed freely again, perceiving that though he knew much, the one thing on which M. de Rosny's design turned had escaped him. The secret interview with the king, which compromised alike Henry himself and M. de Rambouillet, had apparently passed unnoticed and unsuspected. With a sigh of intense relief I slid back the dagger, which I had fully made up my mind to use had he known all, and drew my cloak round me with a shrug of feigned indifference. I sweated to think what he did know, but our interview with the king having escaped him, I breathed again.

'Well, sir,' I said curtly, 'I have listened. And now, what is the purpose of all this?'

'My purpose?' he answered, his eyes glittering. 'To show you that you are in my power. You are the agent of M. de Rosny. I, the agent, however humble, of the Holy Catholic League. Of your movements I know all. What do you know of mine?'

'Knowledge,' I made grim answer, 'is not everything, sir priest.'

'It is more than it was,' he said, smiling his thin-lipped smile. 'It is going to be more than it is. And I know much—about you, M. de Marsac.'

'You know too much!' I retorted, feeling his covert threats close around me like the folds of some great serpent. 'But you are imprudent, I think. Will you tell me what is to prevent me striking you through where you stand, and ridding myself at a blow of so much knowledge?'

'The presence of three men, M. de Marsac,' he answered lightly, waving his hand towards M. François and the others, 'every one of whom would give you up to justice. You forget that you are north of the Loire, and that priests are not to be massacred here with impunity, as in your lawless south-country. However, enough. The night is cold, and M. d'Agen grows suspicious as well as impatient. We have, perhaps, spoken too long already. Permit me'—he bowed and drew back a step—'to resume this discussion to-morrow.'

Despite his politeness and the hollow civility with which he thus sought to close the interview, the light of triumph which

shone in his eyes, as the glare of the torch fell athwart them; no less than the assured tone of his voice, told me clearly that he knew his power. He seemed, indeed, transformed: no longer a slinking, peaceful clerk, preying on a woman's fears, but a bold and crafty schemer, skilled and unscrupulous, possessed of hidden knowledge and hidden resources; the personification of evil intellect. For a moment, knowing all I knew, and particularly the responsibilities which lay before me, and the interests committed to my hands, I quailed, confessing myself unequal to him. I forgot the righteous vengeance I owed him; I cried out helplessly against the ill-fortune which had brought him across my path. I saw myself enmeshed and fettered beyond hope of escape, and by an effort only controlled the despair I felt.

'To-morrow?' I muttered hoarsely. 'At what time?'

He shook his head with a cunning smile. 'A thousand thanks, but I will settle that myself!' he answered. 'Au revoir!' And muttering a word of leave-taking to M. François d'Agen, he blessed the two servants, and went out into the night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OFFER OF THE LEAGUE.

WHEN the last sound of his footsteps died away, I awoke as from an evil dream, and becoming conscious of the presence of M. François and the servants, recollected mechanically that I owed the former an apology for my discourtesy in keeping him standing in the cold. I began to offer it; but my distress and confusion of mind were such that in the middle of a set phrase I broke off, and stood looking fixedly at him, my trouble so plain that he asked me civilly if anything ailed me.

'No,' I answered, turning from him impatiently; 'nothing, nothing, sir. Or tell me,' I continued, with an abrupt change of mind, 'who is that who has just left us?'

'Father Antoine, do you mean?'

'Ay, Father Antoine, Father Judas, call him what you like,' I rejoined bitterly.

'Then if you leave the choice to me,' M. François answered with grave politeness, 'I would rather call him something more pleasant, M. de Marsac—James or John, let us say. For there is

little said here which does not come back to him. If walls have ears, the walls of Blois are in his pay. But I thought you knew him,' he continued. 'He is secretary, confidant, chaplain, what you will, to Cardinal Retz, and one of those whom—in your ear—greater men court and more powerful men lean on. If I had to choose between them, I would rather cross M. de Crillon.'

'I am obliged to you,' I muttered, checked as much by his manner as his words.

'Not at all,' he answered more lightly. 'Any information I have is at your disposal.'

However, I saw the imprudence of venturing farther, and hastened to take leave of him, persuading him to allow one of M. de Rambouillet's servants to accompany him home. He said that he should call on me in the morning; and forcing myself to answer him in a suitable manner, I saw him depart one way, and myself, accompanied by Simon Fleix, went off another. My feet were frozen with long standing—I think the corpse we left was scarce colder—but my head was hot with feverish doubts and fears. The moon had sunk and the streets were dark. Our torch had burned out, and we had no light. But where my followers saw only blackness and vacancy, I saw an evil smile and a lean visage fraught with menace and exultation.

For the more closely I directed my mind to the position in which I stood, the graver it seemed. Pitted against Bruhl alone, amid strange surroundings and in an atmosphere of Court intrigue, I had thought my task sufficiently difficult and the disadvantages under which I laboured sufficiently serious before this interview. Conscious of a certain rustiness and a distaste for finesse, with resources so inferior to Bruhl's that even M. de Rosny's liberality had not done much to make up the difference, I had accepted the post offered me rather readily than sanguinely; with joy, seeing that it held out the hope of high reward, but with no certain expectation of success. Still, matched with a man of violent and headstrong character, I had seen no reason to despair; nor any why I might not arrange the secret meeting between the king and mademoiselle with safety, and conduct to its end an intrigue simple and unsuspected, and requiring for its execution rather courage and caution than address or experience.

Now, however, I found that Bruhl was not my only or my most dangerous antagonist. Another was in the field—or, to speak more correctly, was waiting outside the arena, ready to snatch the prize when we should have disabled one another. From a

dream of Bruhl and myself as engaged in a competition for the king's favour, wherein neither could expose the other nor appeal even in the last resort to the joint-enemies of his Majesty and ourselves, I awoke to a very different state of things; I awoke to find those enemies the masters of the situation, possessed of the clue to our plans, and permitting them only as long as they seemed to threaten no serious peril to themselves.

No discovery could be more mortifying or more fraught with terror. The perspiration stood on my brow as I recalled the warning which M. de Rosny had uttered against Cardinal Retz, or noted down the various points of knowledge which were in Father Antoine's possession. He knew every event of the last month, with one exception, and could tell, I verily believed, how many crowns I had in my pouch. Conceding this, and the secret sources of information he must possess, what hope had I of keeping my future movements from him? Mademoiselle's arrival would be known to him before she had well passed the gates; nor was it likely, or even possible, that I should again succeed in reaching the king's presence untraced and unsuspected. In fine, I saw myself, equally with Bruhl, a puppet in this man's hands, my goings out and my comings in watched and reported to him his mercy the only bar between myself and destruction. At any moment I might be arrested as a Huguenot, the enterprise in which I was engaged ruined, and Mademoiselle de la Vire exposed to the violence of Bruhl or the equally dangerous intrigues of the League.

Under these circumstances I fancied sleep impossible; but habit and weariness are strong persuaders, and when I reached my lodging I slept long and soundly, as became a man who had looked danger in the face more than once. The morning light too brought an accession both of courage and hope. I reflected on the misery of my condition at St. Jean d'Angely, without friends or resources, and driven to herd with such a man as Fresnoy. And telling myself that the gold crowns which M. de Rosny had lavished upon me were not for nothing, nor the more precious friendship with which he had honoured me a gift that called for no return, I rose with new spirit and a countenance which threw Simon Fleix—who had seen me lie down the picture of despair—into the utmost astonishment.

'You have had good dreams,' he said, eyeing me jealously and with a disturbed air.

'I had a very evil one last night,' I answered lightly, wondering

a little why he looked at me so, and why he seemed to resent my return to hopefulness and courage. I might have followed this train of thought farther with advantage, since I possessed a clue to his state of mind ; but at that moment a summons at the door called him away to it, and he presently ushered in M. François, who, saluting me with punctilious politeness, had not said fifty words before he introduced the subject of his toe—no longer, however, in a hostile spirit, but as the happy medium which had led him to recognise the worth and sterling qualities—so he was pleased to say—of his preserver.

I was delighted to find him in this frame of mind, and told him frankly that the friendship with which his kinsman, M. de Rambouillet, honoured me would prevent me giving him satisfaction save in the last resort. He replied that the service I had done him was such as to render this immaterial, unless I had myself cause of offence ; which I was forward to deny.

We were paying one another compliments after this fashion, while I regarded him with the interest which the middle-aged bestow on the young and gallant in whom they see their own youth and hopes mirrored, when the door was again opened, and after a moment's pause admitted, equally, I think, to the disgust of M. François and myself, the form of Father Antoine.

Seldom have two men more diverse stood, I believe, in a room together ; seldom has any greater contrast been presented to a man's eyes than that opened to mine on this occasion. On the one side the gay young spark, with his short cloak, his fine suit of black-and-silver, his trim limbs and jewelled hilt and chased comfit-box ; on the other, the tall, stooping monk, lean-jawed and bright-eyed, whose gown hung about him in coarse, ungainly folds. And M. François' sentiment on first seeing the other was certainly dislike. In spite of this, however, he bestowed a greeting on the new-comer which evidenced a secret awe, and in other ways showed so plain a desire to please that I felt my fears of the priest return in force. I reflected that the talents which in such a garb could win the respect of M. François d'Agen—a brilliant star among the younger courtiers, and one of a class much given to thinking scorn of their fathers' roughness—must be both great and formidable ; and, so considering, I received the monk with a distant courtesy which I had once little thought to extend to him. I put aside for the moment the private grudge I bore him with so much justice, and remembered only the burden which lay on me in my contest with him.

I conjectured without difficulty that he chose to come at this time, when M. François was with me, out of a cunning regard to his own safety; and I was not surprised when M. François, beginning to make his adieux, Father Antoine begged him to wait below, adding that he had something of importance to communicate. He advanced his request in terms of politeness bordering on humility; but I could clearly see that, in assenting to it, M. d'Agen bowed to a will stronger than his own, and would, had he dared to follow his own bent, have given a very different answer. As it was he retired—nominally to give an order to his lackey—with a species of impatient self-restraint which it was not difficult to construe.

Left alone with me, and assured that we had no listeners, the monk was not slow in coming to the point.

'You have thought over what I told you last night?' he said brusquely, dropping in a moment the suave manner which he had maintained in M. François's presence.

I replied coldly that I had.

'And you understand the position?' he continued quickly, looking at me from under his brows as he stood before me, with one clenched fist on the table. 'Or shall I tell you more? Shall I tell you how poor and despised you were some weeks ago, M. de Marsac—you who now go in velvet, and have three men at your back? Or whose gold it is has brought you here, and made you this? Chut! Do not let us trifle. You are here as the secret agent of the King of Navarre. It is my business to learn your plans and his intentions, and I propose to do so.'

'Well?' I said.

'I am prepared to buy them,' he answered; and his eyes sparkled as he spoke, with a greed which set me yet more on my guard.

'For whom?' I asked. Having made up my mind that I must use the same weapons as my adversary, I reflected that to express indignation, such as might become a young man new to the world, could help me not a whit. 'For whom?' I repeated, seeing that he hesitated.

'That is my business,' he replied slowly.

'You want to know too much and tell too little,' I retorted, yawning.

'And you are playing with me,' he cried, looking at me suddenly, with so piercing a gaze and so dark a countenance that I checked a shudder with difficulty. 'So much the worse for you,

so much the worse for you!' he continued fiercely. 'I am here to buy the information you hold, but if you will not sell, there is another way. At an hour's notice I can ruin your plans, and send you to a dungeon! You are like a fish caught in a net not yet drawn. It thrusts its nose this way and that, and touches the mesh, but is slow to take the alarm until the net is drawn—and then it is too late. So it is with you, and so it is,' he added, falling into the ecstatic mood which marked him at times, and left me in doubt whether he were all knave or in part enthusiast, 'with all those who set themselves against St. Peter and his Church!'

'I have heard you say much the same of the King of France,' I said derisively.

'You trust in him?' he retorted, his eyes gleaming. 'You have been up there, and seen his crowded chamber, and counted his forty-five gentlemen and his grey-coated Swiss? I tell you the splendour you saw was a dream, and will vanish as a dream. The man's strength and his glory shall go from him, and that soon. Have you no eyes to see that he is beside the question? There are but two powers in France—the Holy Union, which still prevails, and the accursed Huguenot; and between them is the battle.'

Now you are telling me more,' I said.

He grew sober in a moment, looking at me with a vicious anger hard to describe.

'Tut tut,' he said, showing his yellow teeth, 'the dead tell no tales. And for Henry of Valois, he so loves a monk that you might better accuse his mistress. But for you, I have only to cry "Ho! a Huguenot and a spy!" and though he loved you more than he loved Quélus or Maugiron, he dare not stretch out a finger to save you!'

I knew that he spoke the truth, and with difficulty maintained the air of indifference with which I had entered on the interview.

'But what if I leave Blois?' I ventured, merely to see what he would say.

He laughed. 'You cannot,' he answered. 'The net is round you, M. de Marsac, and there are those at every gate who know you and have their instructions. I can destroy you, but I would fain have your information, and for that I will pay you five hundred crowns and let you go.'

'To fall into the hands of the King of Navarre?'

'He will disown you, in any case,' he answered eagerly. 'He

had that in his mind, my friend, when he selected an agent so obscure. He will disown you. Ah, *mon Dieu!* had I been an hour quicker I had caught Rosny—Rosny himself!’

‘There is one thing lacking still,’ I replied. ‘How am I to be sure that, when I have told you what I know, you will pay me the money or let me go?’

‘I will swear to it!’ he answered earnestly, deceived into thinking I was about to surrender. ‘I will give you my oath, *M. de Marsac!*’

‘I would as soon have your shoe-lace!’ I exclaimed, the indignation I could not entirely repress finding vent in that phrase. ‘A Churchman’s vow is worth a candle—or a candle and a half, is it?’ I continued ironically. ‘I must have some security a great deal more substantial than that, father.’

‘What?’ he asked, looking at me gloomily.

Seeing an opening, I cudgelled my brains to think of any condition which, being fulfilled, might turn the table on him and place him in my power. But his position was so strong, or my wits so weak, that nothing occurred to me at the time, and I sat looking at him, my mind gradually passing from the possibility of escape to the actual danger in which I stood, and which encompassed also Simon Fleix, and, in a degree, doubtless, *M. de Rambouillet*. In four or five days, too, *Mademoiselle de la Vire* would arrive. I wondered if I could send any warning to her; and then, again, I doubted the wisdom of interfering with *M. de Rosny’s* plans, the more as *Maignan*, who had gone to fetch *mademoiselle*, was of a kind to disregard any orders save his master’s.

‘Well!’ said the monk, impatiently recalling me to myself, ‘what security do you want?’

‘I am not quite sure at this moment,’ I made answer slowly. ‘I am in a difficult position. I must have some time to consider.’

‘And to rid yourself of me, if it be possible,’ he said with irony. ‘I quite understand. But I warn you that you are watched; and that wherever you go and whatever you do, eyes which are mine are upon you.’

‘I, too, understand,’ I said coolly.

He stood awhile uncertain, regarding me with mingled doubt and malevolence, tortured on the one hand by fear of losing the prize if he granted delay, on the other of failing as utterly if he exerted his power and did not succeed in subduing my resolution. I watched him, too, and gauging his eagerness and the value of

the stake for which he was striving by the strength of his emotions, drew small comfort from the sight. More than once it had occurred to me, and now it occurred to me again, to extricate myself by a blow. But a natural reluctance to strike an unarmed man, however vile and knavish, and the belief that he had not trusted himself in my power without taking the fullest precautions, withheld me. When he grudgingly, and with many dark threats, proposed to wait three days—and not an hour more—for my answer, I accepted ; for I saw no other alternative open. And on these terms, but not without some short discussion, we parted, and I heard his stealthy footstep go sneaking down the stairs.

(To be continued.)

How Orchids climbed the Trees.

IN paddling up the smaller rivers of Guiana the visitor is struck with the beauty and variety of the orchids and other epiphytes perched on every limb and branch above his head. Coming from a temperate climate, where only mosses, lichens, and perhaps a fern or two, can live under such circumstances, he sees great arums with rosettes of leaves 6 or 8 feet in diameter, crowded groups of hard-leaved tillandsias, mistletoe-like bunches of rhipsalis, orchids, ferns, and mosses, all struggling for places where they can find room to enjoy life and propagate their species. In the dense gloom of the forest, where the branches interlace with each other, they cannot secure enough light, but wherever the continuity is broken by river or savannah, the trees on the borders are decorated with a wealth of these interesting plants. From the river nothing but a sloping bank of foliage is visible, but by paddling through the outer screen, which comes down into the water, a very pretty scene is revealed overhead. Although the direct rays of the sun are shut out, there is generally sufficient light for the epiphytes, and here they give quite a festive appearance to what would otherwise be a tangle of bare limbs and branches. Down to the smallest twigs, every one is loaded with upright, drooping, or hanging plants, some appearing coarse and aggressive, others handsome in both foliage and flower, while delicate little orchids and ferns among the mosses are most pretty and interesting. Where a tree leans over the river, or great branches stretch across a creek, these are covered with epiphytes, the long, cord-like, aerial roots of some of them hanging from a height of 50 feet or more, and branching out into dense broom-like masses of fibres as they touch the water. Even the trunks have great clumps of orchids wherever there is a sufficiency of light, while here and there a plant has made itself at home in the midst of a tangled mass of bush-ropes.

Looking at the dense jungle of marantas, arums, palms, tree-ferns, and other large plants on the bank of the river, we see the utter impossibility of the epiphytes existing on the ground, and appreciate the advantage they have derived by rising above the scene of such an intense struggle. Even on the large branches, however, the fight for life is still carried on, the hardy, and sometimes prickly, wild pines driving the more delicate orchids to take refuge on the trunks and about the forks of great branches, where their rivals cannot exist. They must have room to grow upright; but the orchid more generally grows outward, and even downward, thus accommodating itself to a position where it has no rivals except the scrambling vines, which try to smother it in their passage to the tree-tops.

With such examples of fitness to circumstances, we cannot but observe that orchids must have had a hard struggle before they obtained their present position of comparative ease. They are now perfectly adapted to their forest environment, but it cannot be supposed that this was always the case. Before a plant can become arboreal there must be trees; it therefore necessarily follows that epiphytal orchids once lived on the ground, as so many species of the same family do still. Traces of their former habitats still linger round them, and help to make them doubly interesting to the naturalist.

The great family of *Orchidaceæ*, with its ten thousand species, is undoubtedly the most wonderful of all the natural orders of plants. In no other do we find so many peculiar contrivances of root, tuber, pseudo-bulb, leaf and flower, or such a variety of forms, shapes, and sizes. By a thousand transformations of a single petal the most grotesque, quaint, and elegant forms have been developed. To the botanist, the gardener, the lady who wears them, and the traveller who sees them in their homes, they are a continual source of pleasure. Then, again, they are rare and difficult to procure, and so hard to cultivate that they can never be propagated in great numbers like most other flowers. Even in temperate climates they are among the rarest plants of every country, while those of the tropics, although sometimes common enough, often grow in almost inaccessible places, or can only be procured by felling great trees. Under such circumstances they can never be common, but will probably become scarcer every year, as their more accessible localities are cleared to supply the increasing demand. Only the enormous extent of virgin forest, which is barely accessible at a very great expense and under many

privations, will save some of the more popular kinds from extinction.

Without man's interference these extraordinary plants have developed to an extent hardly exceeded by the most variable of florists' flowers—those which have enjoyed the fostering care of gardeners for two or three centuries. On chalk-down and mountain, in swamp, savannah, and forest, they open their flowers to insects as handsome as themselves, and possibly enjoy life as much as their winged attendants. They never become weeds or establish themselves in cultivated land, but as man advances, retire before him to more inaccessible places. Other garden plants may become pests, but not the orchids. Even ferns will cover the brickwork of a greenhouse, but no one sees a seedling orchid grow spontaneously. In their native homes they are rarely crowded—every one seems to stand alone and regardless of the others. *Tillandsias* grow in masses or groups; they spread all along a branch, and drive everything else out of the field; but the orchids never fight, either among themselves or with other plants. They mind their own business, and leave others to do the same.

Perhaps one of the reasons why they have been successful in life is their retiring, unaggressive natures. They don't want to fight, but rather to get away from the turmoil of life. Nevertheless, they have overcome difficulties before which other plants were obliged to give way. Those of the swamp, chalk-down, and mountain, not only exist, but thrive under conditions most unfavourable to a host of other plants, while the epiphytes flourish where they hardly have a rival. Adhering to the trunk of some forest giant, rising among the thin sedges of a pipeclay savannah, standing on the crevice of a rock with roots crawling into every crack, or seated on a stretch of burning sand, the orchid is equally at home. It not only lives, but flourishes to perfection, neither dwarfed nor starved like some plants in the same localities, but often rising conspicuously above everything in the neighbourhood.

While not aggressive, the orchid is intensely selfish. Every plant is an individual working for its own benefit and that of its descendants. Like good business men, they take care of 'number one,' but, unlike many of these, they never injure others. We may fancy one of them in some past age looking round on the struggle for life and saying, 'What shall I do? I cannot fight because I am too fragile, but I can endure drought and starvation better than most others.' So he took up a position where none of his rivals could live, and devoted his powers and energies to

self-improvement and protection against every danger. That there were enormous difficulties to be overcome is shown by the wonderful contrivances that so many have acquired—contrivances which differ considerably, notwithstanding they may be for the same end. Everywhere among them we find illustrations of the fact that there is more than one right way of doing a thing, as we shall presently see.

The orchids of British Guiana, with which this paper is mainly concerned, number about two hundred and fifty species. The majority are epiphytes, but a fair number grow on rocks, sand-reefs, and both wet and dry savannahs. They vary in size from the leafless *Aëranthes* of 2 inches high to the great *Oncidium altissimum*, which sometimes forms a mass of leaves 4 feet through, and throws up a score of flower-stems 12 feet high. Those that grow in the savannahs have tubers like English orchids, the sand species large pseudo-bulbs, and those on trees either smaller bulbs or thick leaves, in which vitality is retained through the longest drought. In studying the development of an epiphyte, the tuber is perhaps the most important organ, as the preservation of life and storage of food are of the first consequence to every living thing.

Given a plant exposed on the barren chalk-down or savannah to the alternations of the seasons, especially drought and deluge, the most important thing is to make provision against that which is uncongenial. Thousands of plants do this by becoming annuals, and passing through a dry season as dormant seeds. The orchid, however, has chosen a different way, and, like certain hibernating animals, hides itself underground as long as circumstances are unfavourable. Here, with a plentiful store of food in its starchy tubers, it remains for an indefinite period, coming forth in all its beauty of leaf and flower after the rain has permeated its dry chamber.

Whether the tuber is below or above ground when dormant matters but little. Potatoes and other tubers are preserved for months without injury by taking a few simple precautions. It followed, therefore, that the first stage in the development of an epiphyte was coming up to the surface. This might easily happen by heavy rains washing away the soil and exposing the tubers to the sunlight. But it would not do to have such a reservoir of starch within reach of rodents and other animals, and a natural property of light was brought into action, by which the chemical constitution was changed and a thick skin produced. This change

is sometimes seen in a potato which has been partly uncovered while growing—one end is green, covered with a thicker skin, and this part, if cooked, is uneatable. The flood that uncovered the plant probably turned it on its side, and when the tubers began to feel the sun's influence they rose upwards, thus reversing their position, while the roots ran over the ground. After a tropical downpour the lighter particles of earth are washed away and only sand remains. We should therefore look for traces of the first stage among the sand orchids, and here they are quite obvious. The tubers are simply changed into tapering green pseudo-bulbs, from the base of which rise both leaves and flower-stalks.

Arrived at the surface, a secure anchorage became necessary, and this was easily accomplished by a development of the roots. On sand these became matted, while on rocks the well-known aerial roots were produced, which penetrated every crevice and clung to the bottom of damp hollows. What sensitive things these are! They like to run amongst the mosses or in the cracks of the bark of living trees, but will turn away from a dead branch, or try to secure a fresh hold if that on which they live is diseased. The point seems almost conscious, turning here and there as if feeling for a congenial anchorage. It is so tender that cockroaches and crickets nip it off at every opportunity, but on the sand the dense mat of roots affords a congenial harbour for ants, which act as a guard to the whole plant.

Following the sand orchid, we arrive at another stage in its progress. The genus *Coryanthes* is an example of plants with matted roots, fair-sized pseudo-bulbs, thin plaited leaves, and flower-stalks coming from the base of the bulbs. All these characters are found in the sand orchids, but here we have several important developments. No longer on the ground, they cling to the vines above our heads, bring their roots together, and hang their flowers downward. But what is most striking is the garrison of ants in their oval network of roots. Nothing can touch the plant without alarming its guard, which instantly pounce on the unlucky intruder. Even the orchid-collector dare not bring the plant into his canoe until the ants are driven out by soaking in the creek. He pushes it under with a long pole, and takes great care not to let a single one crawl along it, for fear of their painful bites. Other genera, such as *Gongora*, provide for a garrison among their roots in a less perfect manner, and these may be put down as nearer to the sand orchid in this respect.

Wherever the orchids live they feed almost entirely on air and

moisture. Unlike the wiry grasses and sedges which grow with them in the savannahs, they do not take up any appreciable quantity of silica or other mineral substance. They are therefore able to thrive wherever sufficient water for even half the year can be procured, while very many species can live under trees where the light is insufficient for other plants. With such capabilities, it matters little where they are, as, whether on plain, sand-reef, or in the trees, their simple wants can be supplied. That curious genus, *Catasetum*, the flowers of which have been so well described by Darwin, is a good example of the progressive stages of the sand orchid. In *Catasetum discolor* we have a plant growing nowhere but on the sand-reefs, with large pseudo-bulbs, thin leaves, and tall and upright flower-stems. Then comes *Catasetum tridentatum*, which is generally found in the forks of low trees, and only differs in habit from having a short and leaning flower-spike. Finally, the greatest development is reached in *Catasetum longifolium*, only known to grow among the remains of the old leaf-stalks below the canopy of the Eta palm, where pseudo-bulbs, flowers, and leaves, hang downwards, the last being long, narrow, and flexible. Other genera have species showing similar stages, among which may be mentioned *Peristeria*. In the dove orchid (*P. elata*) we have a ground plant with tall, upright, flower-spikes, while in *P. pendula* these hang downward, and are very short.

It may be generally stated that all epiphytal orchids with matted roots and thin leaves have risen upward from the sand. These plants have also, with few exceptions, lateral flower-stalks and large pseudo-bulbs. The genus *Cychnoches*, however, has advanced a step towards a terminal inflorescence by producing its spikes at or above the middle of the pseudo-bulb, and several other sand genera show indications of progress in the same direction. A few have already attained this stage, but it is possible they may have originally come from rock-plants.

Leaving the sand-reefs for the mountains and rocks, we come upon a different class of orchids. To this belong the large families of *Epidendron*, *Schomburgkia*, *Cattleya*, and generally all those which bear their flowers at the top of modified pseudo-bulbs and succulent stems. When growing in narrow crevices it would be obviously difficult to find room for large fleshy pseudo-bulbs and the young growths which continually proceed from below; it therefore became necessary to do something. Probably the first development was on the lines of the *Cychnoches*, but this soon gave way to a terminal flower-spike; then came a

hardening of the pseudo-bulb, which raised itself on a short stalk, and, finally, the partial loss of accommodation for plant-food was compensated by a thickening of the leaves. During a drought the sand orchids lose all their foliage, but this rarely takes place with those of the rocks. In *Schomburgkia tibicinis* we have perhaps the finest example of this development, but the best known is undoubtedly the genus *Cattleya*. Instead of being matted, their roots extend to long distances in every direction, and fasten the plants to rock or tree-trunk more securely than if dense and short. Most of these grow just as freely on the ground as above it, the same species being collected from either locality, even in one district. While the descendants of rock-plants make themselves at home on trunks, and grow outward, those from the sand perch in the forks or on great limbs, and are generally upright.

In the absence of matted roots, rock orchids cannot make the same provision for a garrison of ants as their cousins of the sand-reef. Nevertheless, apparently seeing the efficiency of such a protection, two or three species have developed, as means to the same end, a contrivance which is perhaps more wonderful than that of the *Coryanthes*. It can easily be understood that a family of ants see the advantage of nesting among the roots of a sand orchid, as they often do the same with those of other plants; but we can hardly conceive how they first learnt the use of the hollow bulb. In *Epidendron* (*Diacrium*) *bicornutum* we have a good example. The pseudo-bulbs are long and tapering; and as soon as they mature a natural crack appears at the base, opening into a hollow chamber, where the ants build their nests, secure from feathered enemies or the deluge of a tropical rainfall. A large plant may have thirty or forty bulbs of different ages, some dry and hard, others green and fleshy, every one of which, except the youngest, has its own little community. In return for the house-room thus afforded they protect the plant against all its crawling enemies, paying their rent by performing military service. That they really are protective is shown by the fact that when, under cultivation, the plants are left unguarded, every delicate root-tip shows signs of the depredations of cockroaches or other foes.

The texture of the leaf is the best indication of the plant's original home. The thin, plaited form is as characteristic of the sand orchid as the thick and leathery leaf of that from the rock. Great differences in texture are observable in the latter, but it is never plaited and ribbed like the delicate foliage common to

Cyrtopodium, Catasetum, Cychnoches, Gongora, and Coryanthes. According to the thickness of the leaf, so will a larger or smaller pseudo-bulb be necessary. In Cattleya, many species of Epidendron, and others with terminal flower-spikes, the one or two leaves are moderately thick, and co-operate with the hard, stem-like pseudo-bulb to store food and water against a drought. These plants are very rarely denuded of them; and if this takes place they suffer greatly, while the other class become bare in every dry season without the least injury. The large genus *Oncidium* is a very good example of the connection of leaf and bulb. In species like *Oncidium altissimum* the leaves are rather thin, and the pseudo-bulbs correspondingly large and thick. *Oncidium papilio* has smaller bulbs and thicker leaves, while in *Oncidium Lanceanum* the bulb is almost obsolete and quite useless, and the leaves thick as sole leather. The last-mentioned species is typical of a large class which has got to that stage where the pseudo-bulb is no longer needed. It is, however, still traceable as a miniature stem, often as dry and hard as it was formerly succulent. Other genera besides *Oncidium* show this later development, which is most conspicuous in plants with lateral flower-stems. *Scuticaria* is one of the most peculiar, as its leaves are cylindrical, hanging downward for 3 or 4 feet like lengths of thick cord. These are almost certainly derived from sand orchids, and may be considered the most advanced of their class in one direction.

While orchids from the sand-reefs have taken one line to get rid of the pseudo-bulb, others from the rocks have not been idle. The genus *Epidendron* contains two distinct classes: one with pseudo-bulbs, and the other with leafy stems. In the latter division, the seat of life and store of food are conserved in modifications of the bulb, which vary greatly from the type, and are often hard and wiry. Perhaps the most conspicuous example of this is found in the genus *Sobralia*, some species of which grow so high as to form impenetrable thickets on the mountains. These, however, rarely ascend the trees, although one of the smaller kinds is often found a few feet above the ground. Here we have an enormous divergence from the type, as the stems are hard and dry and the leaves thin, only the flowers retaining the delicacy and fragility so conspicuous in most orchids.

Among so many climbing plants, it would naturally be supposed that some of the orchid family would develop in that direction, and we have a most striking example in *Vanilla*. That

there are not more scrambling vines in the order is probably due to the fact that few orchids can endure the intense glare above the tree-tops. The vanilla, however, with its thick leaves and stems, is specially adapted for such a position. Unlike other climbers, it has no long tap-root, but is often cut off from the soil, and is really an elongated epiphyte. A small species grows below the canopy of the Eta palm in the midst of the swamp, and here any connection with the soil is impossible. Vanilla is the only true climbing genus, but there are signs here and there of a move in the same direction by others. In some of the *Dendrobiums*, aerial roots and new shoots are produced at the end of the long stems, which in congenial situations enable the plant to raise itself to a higher position, and thus virtually become scandent. Again, *Zygopetalon rostratum* attaches itself to growing trees, and rises with them to a considerable height. Unlike the vanilla, it has a hard stem-like extension, to which pseudobulbs and leaves are attached at intervals of about a foot. The lowest are withered, but farther up they are more fresh, while the topmost buds are those of the current year, and bear flowers. The result is a long string, often extending 6 or 8 feet up the tree, and branching to the side if more light can be gained in that direction. It is never attached to the soil in any way, and is therefore truly epiphytal, gaining an advantage over others by changing its position for one more congenial when necessary. Under cultivation it appears to give up this climbing habit, probably because the conditions are unfavourable to its continuance. All these climbers appear to have been developed from rock plants, and they may be compared with the strawberry and other stoloniferous plants rather than ordinary vines.

The end and aim of all these contrivances has been to secure a position where sufficient air, moisture, and especially light, can be procured. That this has been attained is proved by the position of this great family to-day. Wherever orchids are found, their perfect adaptation to circumstances is most strikingly exemplified. Whether on rock or sand-reef, exposed to the direct rays of a tropical sun, on the upper limbs of some forest giant, or hidden under a canopy of foliage, where only diffused light can reach them, they are equally at home. It does not, however, follow that they are destined to live the longer on this account. Change their environment, and the fact that they are perfectly adapted to it (and no other) becomes their ruin. Prosperity under one condition does not imply the same under other circum-

stances, but, on the contrary, renders them less fitted for the changes which may at any time come about through man's interference. Like the native Indians, they are so well fitted for their habitats that they cannot accommodate themselves to any other. The more aggressive weeds live under many conditions, and for this reason drive everything before them, while native plants, suited only to one, cannot survive a change.

Among so many evidences of development, a few genera go to prove that the opposite has taken place. Although the pseudo-bulb is of the highest importance, it is, as we have seen, wanting in many species. In most of these, however, it has given place to special contrivances in leaf or stem. In the genus *Aëranthes* we have species consisting of nothing more than a few aerial roots, from which proceed a tiny flower-spike; and other genera show signs of degradation here and there. Nevertheless, these deformed ones live on in their own quiet way, making all the greater use of one faculty because others are wanting.

Coming now to the most striking, if not most wonderful, part of the orchids, their flowers, the subject is so vast that we can do no more than give a glance at their arrangement. On sand the flower-stems grow straight upward and are often very tall, as they have to rise above the low, wiry plants which grow in the same situation. Those of the rocks are also upright, and in some cases have long spikes from the top—a character not found in the true epiphytes, the flowers of which, when terminal, are almost always sessile. These, when they take to the trees, always grow up the trunk, the upright, leafy pseudo-bulb spreading outward, with a slight tendency to hang downward. *Cattleyas* always grow in this way, and the flowers only show to perfection when looked at from a short distance off, and below the plant. Where the orchids are pushed to the edge of the limbs by the more robust tillandsias, they hang their flower-stems downward, and clear of all obstruction. In such cases there is a tendency to shorten them more and more, until, instead of depending from a stalk 2 feet long, the flowers peep out just below the pseudo-bulbs. On smaller branches and twigs, where there is no room for rivals, the smaller orchids have more scope, and take less care to push out their flowers below; but even here the whole plant often trails downward or hangs over, thus gaining the same advantage.

To the naturalist in the tropics a collection of orchids is a never-ending source of interest. He cannot help feeling that they are not only living things, but that they have faculties not

generally credited to members of the Vegetable Kingdom. He sees them rejoicing in congenial positions, and shrinking before a strong wind or the burning rays of a tropical sun. When the block to which they adhere becomes decayed, they show their distaste in an unmistakable manner by throwing out new aerial roots, which feel their way to some better anchorage. If a drought comes, and no water is given, the leaves fall, and they lie dormant for months, to awake and put forth their wonderful flowers when the rains fall. When they can no longer exist under most trying circumstances, they die very slowly, often lingering on for years without the sign of a flower. Even when the bud is in an advanced stage, a change of place will often cause it to wither before opening.

The orchid-lover knows his plants as the shepherd his sheep. He may have a dozen of one species, and can recognise the flower of each individual. He loves them, and thinks of them almost as persons, rejoicing in their welfare, and sorrowing when they are sick or about to die. Like a good nurse, he moves them from one place to another, and watches to see whether they improve by the change. When, after all his care, they die, he is almost inconsolable. The plant may be the only one of its kind, and perhaps another is unobtainable. All he can do is to treasure up its portrait as a memento of one that has been loved but, unfortunately, lost. He may even feel some touch of remorse as he thinks that perhaps if something more had been done its life might have been saved.

When they are strong, healthy, and vigorous, he rejoices with them. Morning and evening he gazes fondly on them, looking for new leaf and flower buds, watching their gradual development, and, if the plant has not produced flowers before while in his possession, eagerly anticipating their advent. They are sure to be different from the others in some way, and perhaps the character may be so marked as to excel every one of the same species. The true orchidophile, however, loves his plants too well to neglect one for another, for every individual has its own special beauties. Some may be larger and more showy than the others, and a fancier will pick out what he considers the best; but the naturalist often finds more to admire in some of the despised ones. To him the neglected genus *Catasetum* is more interesting than the gorgeous *Cattleya*.

As he takes his morning walk, and sees a number of uncommon bees flying towards a certain part of the garden, he knows at once that the *Catasetum* which he saw in bud yesterday is now

open. On getting near, the flower-spike is seen surrounded by bees, some of which are almost hidden in the hood-like recesses of the flowers. Here is one with the pollen masses sticking between the shoulders, and there another which is blundering along with a pair on one of its wings, where, of course, they are in the wrong place, and hamper its flight. This latter must have been struggling with another for a sip of the nectar, and as only one could get at it properly, the pollen masses stuck on the wing instead of the back. Other genera are almost as interesting as *Catasetum*—*Coryanthes* perhaps more so. To see the unique shape of the flowers of the latter is quite a wonder, but to observe its end and aim is a revelation. Hanging downward from an oval bunch of roots, on which the leaves are perched, is a flower-stem, to which several beautiful cups are attached. Into these a liquid is distilled which covers the bottom. In the early morning a metallic-green bee is attracted by the powerful odour of the flower, and, flying to it, falls into the cup, where its wings are wetted. Unable to fly or crawl up the steep sides, it moves round and round for a few minutes until it perceives a narrow chink at one end. This opening is too small for it to pass through easily, but by pushing hard it opens like a spring door, and the insect in going out rubs against the pollen-case, and carries off its contents on his back. Still unable to fly, and perhaps confused with the strong odour, it crawls up the stalk and slips into another cup, this time rubbing the pollen masses on the stigma, thus fertilising the flower. All the white orchids are fertilised at night by moths, and these may still be seen at work very early in the morning. Although more simple than either *Catasetum* or *Coryanthes*, every species is worthy of most careful investigation.

How can the naturalist, with these and a thousand other examples before him, help allowing that there is something higher here than what is commonly called vegetating? Everything in the life-history of the orchids goes to prove that they have been working towards certain ends for ages, with what results we see to-day. A great deal has been written about their cultivation and collection, but few have had opportunities of seeing them at home in all their glory and luxuriance. Those who have done so will perhaps be able to confirm by their experience in other countries what we have here given as a page in the life-history of the Guiana orchids.

JAMES RODWAY.

A Free Pardon.

Lost to life and use and name and fame.—TENNYSON.

PART I.

‘**F**OR the poor,’ said Mr. Blencowe, who, with his fellow-collector, Mr. Vickers, had just come from emptying the alms-boxes, ‘one pound, seventeen shillings, two pence,’ and he laid down the money in a little heap on the sacristy table.

‘Thank you,’ said Father Urquhart, as he entered in his book, ‘One pound, seventeen shillings, two pence.’

‘Altar and candle offerings, nine shillings.’

‘Nine shillings,’ repeated the priest gloomily.

Then came ‘Masses for the Departed,’ ‘Peter’s Pence,’ &c., each with a mere tale of shillings, and then Father Urquhart closed the book, and said in a tone of quiet despair, ‘Thank you, gentlemen,’ and the two gentlemen who acted as collectors, having rendered up the money, left the sacristy wondering, as for some time they had wondered, at the marked falling off in the offertory. Once a week they emptied the various compartments of the alms-box and carried the offerings of the congregation to the priest, but now there were only shillings to carry, where once there had been pounds.

‘What can have made such a difference?’ exclaimed Mr. Vickers. ‘I can see that Father Urquhart is as much surprised as we are, only he blames himself for it, and is unhappy.’

‘I know—I know,’ said Mr. Blencowe, ‘his face makes me miserable! I can’t for the life of me understand what can have made everyone turn so niggardly. It seems to me that here in Slagborough the very source of benevolence is dried up.’

‘Yes, and things seem to be going from bad to worse.’

‘They are worse even this week than you are aware of, Vickers. I mean there was one sovereign to-day in the poor-box, though there was no gold anywhere else; but I am afraid

that I myself only put that sovereign in, because Father Urquhart looks so wretched when, week after week, we appear with no money to speak of.'

Mr. Vickers could scarcely conceal his amazement. 'You put it in?' he exclaimed.

'Yes, on Sunday. I was only going to give five shillings, as usual, but I thought I would make it a pound to help to cheer him.'

'But, my dear Blencowe, I had exactly the same thought, and I put that sovereign into the box myself this afternoon when we came into the church!'

'My dear fellow, I assure you I put it in on Sunday!'

'I assure you I put it in this afternoon!'

'You thought you did; but you got hold of a shilling by mistake.'

'Or you did?'

'Impossible! Mine was given in broad daylight.'

Each was convinced that he had made no mistake, but recognised that he had no means of proving it; nor did either particularly care to prove it, each seeing that his intention had in any case been fulfilled.

'Well,' observed Mr. Blencowe with a smile, 'one of us must have made a mistake, so we had better both give double next time "to make the balance true."'

'But you forget that next time we shall have to give four or five times as much. Everyone will give handsomely after the Candlemas sermon—even if they do not want to do it, the Bishop's eloquence will make them. Good evening, Blencowe,' and so saying, Mr. Vickers darted up the steps to his own door.

'I am afraid the Bishop will not set poor, dear Father Urquhart's mind at rest,' thought Mr. Blencowe sadly, for he tenderly loved the man. Three years ago he had come to Slagborough as the successor of a dear friend of the Blencowes'. For months they had assured themselves that no one could ever replace the priest whom they had lost, and then they had discovered that Father Urquhart had more than done so. Slagborough was a rough and not particularly prosperous North-country town, and his flock was principally composed of poor Irish people with quick tempers and quicker methods of showing them. He had, of course, not been able to prevent the poker playing an important part in the family councils of some of these his parishioners, but he had done much towards keeping it in its proper place; and

by his unfailing kindness and sympathy, and many acts of generous devotion, he had won much love.

And yet there was something that the Slagborough people did not at all like about Father Urquhart, and it was this—he came from ‘down South,’ and often had to ask for an explanation of some of their North-country words and phrases; nor was he himself always ‘understanded of the people,’ and the said people held that it was ‘nobbut foolishness of any priest, ne matter who nor what he was, for to come and saddle down in amang a lot of folks who couldn’t never mak’ ne sense out of nought that he said to them.’ Thinking of these and other things of the like kind, Mr. Blencowe walked on for some time, but his heart ached at the recollection of the priest’s patient and pathetic face, and he turned back to see if he could not persuade Father Urquhart to go home and dine with him. The church looked strangely vast and desolate when Mr. Blencowe re-entered it. So far as he could see, no one was there, but without close inspection it was impossible to say how many black-robed, half-crouching, half-kneeling figures might not be lurking in out-of-the-way corners. Passing by long rows of pillars, which seemed to loom forth from the obscurity with a whiteness that was scarcely natural, he made his way to the chill and desolate sacristy. Father Urquhart was still there, standing poring over a paper with long columns of figures on it. His profile stood out in sharp relief from the dark panelling of the presses and walls. ‘What a beautiful face it was! ‘Bleach all the colour out of it,’ Mr. Blencowe had often said, ‘and it would be just like that of a fine Greek statue;’ but now, when this thought again presented itself, he became aware that all the colour was bleached out of it, and could not help thinking that there must be something much more serious on the priest’s mind than a mere dread that all was going wrong in his parish because he was a South-country man born and bred, and must on that account for ever remain an alien to the respect and love of a North-country population.

‘I want you to come out to Ashdene with me and dine with us,’ said Mr. Blencowe, as soon as he saw that he could speak without interrupting an addition sum. ‘Do come. It is not a party—we are alone.’

‘Not to-night, thank you. Work is waiting for me in my study that will keep me most of the evening.’

Mr. Blencowe used all his powers of persuasion, but in vain, and when once more on his way home his mind was still more per-

plexed. Money troubles might, of course, be pressing on Father Urquhart, for his income was small, and judging by what Mr. Blencowe himself saw and heard, he seemed to give most of it away. But then he was not the man to regard money troubles as troubles at all. So long as he had a house over his head, clothes, good or bad, to cover him, bread to eat, and water to drink, he would want no more. The money troubles of a man who could reduce his wants to such a minimum scarcely required to be taken into account.

‘Edward, you have not said one word for the last hour!’ remarked Mrs. Blencowe when the clock struck ten.

‘I can’t help thinking about Father Urquhart. He seems so woefully out of spirits.’

‘So you said before; but it can’t be about not getting on with the Slagborough people, for no priest was ever more loved by his flock.’

‘Then it should pay a little more attention to what he says, and “remember the poor and needy.” There is next to nothing in the offertory nowadays.’

‘You must account for that in some other way than any you have yet thought of. Could anyone steal what is given?’

‘Impossible! The box has a most excellent lock and only one key, which I myself keep. I never open the box except in the presence of Vickers. He can’t open it without me—no one can—not even Father Urquhart, for no one besides myself has a key. It would be difficult to use one, too, even if anyone had it, for someone is nearly always in the church, though I must say—,’ but here he paused.

‘You must say what? Go on.’

‘I was only going to say that had it been possible to open the box I really should have suspected that it had been done during the past week, for both Vickers and I were certain that we had each put a sovereign into the poor-box, and only one coin of the kind was to be found.’

‘Only one sovereign was in the poor-box, and each of you thought that you had given it! When did you give yours?’

‘On Sunday morning.’

‘And he his?’

‘This very afternoon—twenty minutes or so before we cleared the boxes.’

‘And you were both sure you had given a sovereign, and yet only one was there. How do you account for that?’

'One of us must have given a shilling by mistake.'

'That, dear, would not account for it,' said Mrs. Blencowe drily, 'for I myself put a sovereign into the poor-box on Sunday. I took it carefully out of my sovereign-purse, and I swear that I made no mistake. Now, I think, you must see that someone is stealing the money.'

Mr. Blencowe was silent. Feeling that this was because he was unconvinced, she continued, 'That makes two pounds that we know of that the thief has got, and he must have got a great deal more that we do not know of. There are not a great many Catholics in Slagborough, but some of them are rich. Do you suppose that people like the Hedleys, and Smythe-Sympsons, and Scrope-Brownes, and ever so many more, do not give handsomely? The thief has got their money and ours, and would have got what Mr. Vickers gave too, only it was put in just before you cleared the boxes.'

'It really does look very much as if you were right, Agnes,' said Mr. Blencowe sadly.

'Right? Of course I am! How much used you generally to find in the boxes last year?'

'Oh, never less than four, or five, or six pounds, but people are holding back for the Candlemas sermon—we always have a great haul then.'

'It is the thief who will have the great haul! But I can see you don't believe that there is a thief.'

He scarcely did. He himself might have made a mistake, or his wife might, or perhaps Vickers. It was so easy to make a mistake.

'The money is stolen, Edward! It behoves you to be on your guard. Father Urquhart knows it. That is what is making him so ill.'

'Then he should have spoken to me at once,' said Mr. Blencowe, beginning to be a little more convinced. 'It was his duty to tell me, and then we could have employed detectives and had the church watched.'

'Don't you see that the very thought of such a thing being necessary is torture to Father Urquhart—he is so sensitive, so high-minded?'

'It will have to be done! I must speak to him at once—or stay, shall I do a little detective business on my own account?'

'Ah! It is getting just like a Boisgobey novel! But Boisgobey's amateur detectives always impart their suspicions, and

confide each important step that they intend to take to the criminal himself, and he is always the most unlikely person in the book. Who is the most unlikely person in Slagborough?’

‘Mr. Scrope-Browne. Write a novel about it yourself, Agnes, and make him the villain.’

‘Oh, no; that is clumsy! I should make Father Urquhart the criminal. Some absolutely imperative need for money shall have suddenly arisen, and his honour and honesty shall have been overmastered by necessity. He shall go about in a state of gloomy despair, which shall be visible to all, though none shall suspect the cause.’

‘Just as Father Urquhart is doing now!’ said Mr. Blencowe drily.

‘Good heavens, Edward! I did not for a moment mean that!’

‘Of course not! It is a capital subject though. I wonder what we on the bench should think of honour and honesty having been suddenly overmastered by necessity, if that phrase were used to us as an excuse?’

‘I really cannot believe that the money is stolen, Agnes,’ he said after a pause. ‘At the same time, when once the idea has been put into my head by you, I should be a fool if I did not take some precautions.’

‘What shall you do?’

‘In the first place—my dear, don’t be offended—I shall take your hint about Boisgobey, and be very careful to hold my tongue. I shall not even take my wife into my confidence.’

Next day Mr. Blencowe went to the church, and availing himself of an opportunity when he could do it unobserved, put into the poor-box a five-pound note, of which he had carefully taken the number, and a marked sovereign.

PART II.

FATHER URQUHART’S former nurse and present housekeeper (who, oddly enough, had been born in the North and had lived there till she was ‘a woman grown’) was as much perplexed as the Blencowes, and infinitely more anxious. Her master was not like the same man. Until lately he, though working like a galley-slave, had always been happy and cheerful, with a word of praise for any little dish she set before him, and of kindness for herself whenever she ‘came across’ him. Now he was moody and silent,

ate without seeming to care whether his food were good or bad, and passed her without so much as knowing that she was there. His bed, too, showed the perturbation of his mind. She had 'but to look at it to see how very little sleeping had been done in it.' A change must come soon or he would 'fret himself away,' so the day after the Candlemas sermon she waylaid him as he was going out. 'My dear boy,' she said piteously—'sir, I mean—my heart aches when I see you; you are taking on that badly about something that you neither eat nor sleep!'

'I am all right,' he said, trying to get out of the house, but the passage was narrow and she stout, and he could not reach the door unless she turned sideways and crushed herself up against the wall, which she did not seem to intend to do.

'You must let me speak, sir. You are fairly throwing away your health, to say nothing of your comfort, for comfort's a thing you never take into account. You don't eat enough to keep even a sparrow going! You don't sleep, and you are walking about upon those poor feet of yours with an empty stomach from early morning till late night.'

To her delight, her words made him smile and return to the speech of other days. 'Nurse, dear, I'm all right! One or two things are rather worrying me, that's all.'

'If I could be certain that he was worried about one or two things I wouldn't mind so much,' she thought, 'but I fear it's only one.'

'Will you promise to be in by half-past seven?' she said, for she wanted to make a certain pudding that he liked.

'Let me go now, and I will.'

'Well, bless him for a saint whatever he does to vex me!' she thought. 'He certainly has ways that would have worn out the patience of Job himself, and that in the second or third chapter.' Her pudding might have been flavoured with bitterness, for while making it her mind was occupied with his misdeeds. How often she had made some dish to tempt his appetite, and before even tasting it he had run off with the greater part to some invalid, who would probably never eat a bite of it; and when he had returned, his own portion 'was that sad that it was not worth eating.' 'It's cheating your mouth, sir, to put such stuff as that into it,' she had said, but nothing was to be got from him but 'It's all right!' The grapes and wine sent for him when he looked ill found their way to the sick too. She had even caught him carrying his blankets and pillows downstairs to give to some-

one at the door. She tried to check these reminiscences, but in vain. There was that still worse thing that he had done fifteen months ago—it had all but cost him his life. Proctor, the sacristan, was ill with typhus fever of so malignant a nature that no nurse would stay with him. Paid people might be afraid, but her dear master had gone to the man's bedside as soon as he had heard that he was thus abandoned, and had nursed him night and day single-handed, leaving his own house to a priest who came to do his duties, and his poor old nurse to the misery of having to provide every comfort for a stranger, while her master had not even a bed to lie down on, or a bite that was fit to eat. He had nursed that man Proctor for three weeks as tenderly as any woman could have done, and had just strength left to arrange for having him sent to the sea and write a cheque to pay for it, before he crept into bed to battle with the fever himself. Proctor was 'well done to' while away, and came back strong and well; but her poor master had a hard fight for his life, and a fight with poverty afterwards, for all his money had gone to bring the sacristan round. 'You ought to have strong beef-tea and good port wine,' she had said when she saw her master's hollow cheeks and transparent hands, 'and the butcher says that no more meat shall come here until we have paid up what's owing already.'

'It can't be paid for another fortnight, when my salary will come,' he had said; and being frankly informed that he need not have given away all that he had to Proctor, and left himself and her with nothing but bread and water, and water and bread for a change, until money came in, he had answered, 'They will be sweetened by the thought that we have kept the poor fellow alive to work for his wife and family.'

She had not trusted herself to reply—she did not hold with vexing people who had just risen from a sick bed, but it had been on the tip of her tongue to tell him that she could do very well without any such sweetening for her food. There was no controlling him—he might be fit for heaven, but he was not fit for earth.

While she, poor woman, was thus occupied with reminiscences of his last year's misdoings, he was seated in the confessional. It was not yet the hour when his presence was expected, but he sat in the darkness, glad to be alone and unseen while wrestling with a horrible fear which day by day was taking more forcible possession of him—a fear that Proctor, the sacristan, was stealing the money of the church and of the poor. 'It is impossible!

It is simply impossible!' he told himself. 'Proctor conducts himself excellently in every relation of life.' And yet, guided by one of the flashes of insight peculiar to persons of a highly sensitive organisation, he had divined the truth, and he knew it. 'I would have staked my life on his honesty,' he continued, with would-be conviction; but again this inner sense revealed to him that he had almost always felt some doubt of the man. 'It would be such a Judas-like act of treachery,' he pleaded with himself, 'but if one Judas has existed, why not two? Proctor could most easily do it, for his duties bring him to the church at all hours. Proctor has recently opened a shop, and it is hard to imagine where he found the money; and, worst of all, he has a look in his face which tells me that he is afraid to meet my eye. The ingratitude of it would kill me!'

Two large tears rolled down Father Urquhart's face. They were not what people are pleased to call tears of weakness, but tears of blood wrung from an iron soul which had unluckily come into the world in a weak body. 'I shall breathe freely,' he thought after a while, 'if I find that the thief is another man. God help me, what am I saying? Why is there to be a thief at all? Why have I not the heart to sacrifice my own self-love and say that it will be a relief to me to discover that it is my own incompetence and insufficiency that have hardened the hearts of those who, when I first came here, were so generous? Should it be so, I will leave this place at once. I——'

There was a sound—it was like the faint chink of money—and then there was a click, and Father Urquhart had heard that click before, and knew that it always accompanied the act of locking the alms-box. Trembling with excitement, he bent forward and quietly raised a corner of the curtain which hung down in front of the confessional. A man was just moving away from the pillar to which the box was affixed. Even in the semi-darkness, the priest had no difficulty in recognising that this man was Proctor, and his heart began to beat so violently that it seemed impossible that it could be unheard by the thief.

Proctor paused—stood still; then he moved another step, and again stood still, as if unable to go through with something that he had intended to do. Had he heard the beating of the priest's heart? Had he seen the slight movement of the curtain, or had a great fear come upon him that he was about to fall into the hands of the living God?

Proctor stood still a minute longer—made one more step for—

ward—hesitated—then like one who had instantly taken an important resolution, he plunged forward, vehemently exclaiming, as if to himself, 'I can't do it! I can't do it!' and having rung the bell of the confessional, fell on his knees to await the arrival of the priest. But the priest was there already; so with sobs and tears Proctor began his *confiteor*.

The sum of his confession was this. Nine months before, being in urgent need of money, he had, with much difficulty, procured a key which would serve his purpose, and since then he had habitually appropriated a part of the offertory—at first a small part, then nearly the whole.

'Restitution must be made,' said the priest sternly.

'Yes, restitution,' said Proctor, but he had forgotten that that would be enforced, and was half mad with rage. Unwillingly he rose to his feet and went to the front of the confessional, where for one moment he paused, and then he put his hand behind the sheltering curtain and flung in a small bundle, which fell on the priest's knee, saying as he did it, 'There! Restitution is made! You saved my body last year; you have saved my soul this!'

Having received absolution, slowly and humbly, and with head bent down in shame, he began to creep out of the church.

So noiselessly did he move—so earnestly engaged in conversation were they, that two men, sitting with their backs turned to him on a bench near the door, were unaware of his approach. One was speaking very earnestly in a very low voice, but Proctor caught the words, 'Offertory money,' and paused to listen.

'I can't help thinking that we ought to have known that there was something wrong about it before.'

Even in this dark corner he recognised that Mr. Blencowe was the speaker, and that his companion was Mr. Vickers.

'Other people will say that besides you,' said Mr. Vickers.

'That's what I am afraid of! Is there anyone whom you suspect?'

'No, not unless it is that hangdog-looking fellow whom Father Urquhart has been so kind to.'

'What, Proctor?'

'Yes, Proctor. I can't abide the fellow! His knees knock against each other as he walks, his teeth seem to be dropping out of his mouth as he talks, he is loosely knit together both in body and mind, and might shuffle or stumble into any wickedness.'

'He certainly has been launching out lately in a most surprising way in that shop of his.'

Proctor had heard enough, and left the church at once. They sat where they were. They had come to clear the boxes so much before the appointed time, that there was no chance of finding Father Urquhart in the sacristy for at least half an hour longer. Desire to learn the result of his experiment with the marked money had made Mr. Blencowe restless, and he had come early and made Mr. Vickers come too. The marked money was, of course, not to be seen. There was, indeed, very little money of any kind to be seen, and yet to both the collectors' knowledge some large offerings had been made.

About twenty-five minutes later a woman left the confessional, and as no one came to take her place, Father Urquhart, who up to this time had not been able to stir from the spot, rose to replace the stolen money in the alms-box without further delay.

'His reverence is coming, Blencowe,' whispered Mr. Vickers. 'Let us go to the sacristy.' But they were kept in their places by what they saw.

Two steps led down from the confessional, and Father Urquhart, in soutane and stole, and with the packet of stolen money in his hand, was just descending them, when a policeman, who with the sacristan had been standing half-concealed by a pillar, came quietly forward, touched the priest's arm, and said in a low voice, 'You must come with me, sir. You are charged with robbing the poor-box.'

Father Urquhart started, turned as pale as death, and the bundle he held in his hand dropped from it and fell heavily to the ground.

'I! I! Who charges——'

'I do,' said the sacristan coming from behind the pillar, and never in his life had he walked more firmly or spoken with such decision.

'You! Oh, my God!'

'Constable,' said the sacristan, 'I give his reverence in charge. I saw him commit the robbery not an hour ago.'

'You scoundrel!' cried the priest, who was trembling from head to foot. 'You most miserable scoundrel! Policeman——' and then he stopped, and his expression changed to one of absolutely blank dismay, for he had remembered what in the first shock of amazed excitement he had forgotten, that all which could serve as his own justification had been imparted to him under seal of confession, and that not one single word of it must ever pass his lips. The look which he cast on Proctor made the man

quail. It was seen by more than the police-constable, for Mr. Blencowe and Mr. Vickers had drawn near.

'You have been kind to me I know,' said Proctor, 'but I did see you doing it.'

'Constable,' began Father Urquhart, 'I——'

'I must warn you to be careful what you say, sir, for it will be used in evidence.'

'Evidence! There is no evidence against me—there can be none. I am innocent! So help me God, I am innocent.'

'No evidence!' cried Proctor. 'No evidence! What was it that your reverence dropped in such a fright when the constable came up and charged you with the robbery? That may have been the money for anything that we know, and if it was, won't that be evidence?'

'The man must be mad!' said Mr. Blencowe; and then he turned to the policeman and said, 'Please to pick up that white package, Robson, and open it, and let us have an end of this disgraceful folly.'

As Mr. Blencowe was a magistrate, it was promptly picked up, and it would have been opened as promptly had not Father Urquhart said hastily and in much confusion—

'It is money, but——'

'But what?' demanded Proctor, and there was a dancing light in his eyes which bore witness to a revulsion from the extremity of terror to a state of complete security. Father Urquhart saw it, and knew that the wretch before him was rejoicing in the knowledge that his secret was safe. A cold perspiration broke out on the unhappy priest's forehead; he recognised the full danger and horror of his position; he recognised also that Proctor must have seen him move the curtain aside, and, finding himself detected, had then and there resolved to confess his crime as a means of escape for himself, but that for the priest who had heard his confession and received the stolen money there would be no escape.

'Mr. Blencowe,' he said in his despair, 'tell them—do be so kind as to tell them that I could not open the—alms-box—that I have no key—that I never had one——'

'No key!' interrupted the police-constable indignantly, for beneath his fingers, in the still unopened napkin, was something that felt very like one. 'I should like to know what you call this, gentlemen,' for even while he was speaking he had untied and unfolded the bit of altar-linen, and lying inside it, among a heap of gold, silver, and bronze coins, and some crisp but crushed-up

bank-notes, a key was to be seen, which, on examination, proved to be one that would open the alms-box.

While the policeman was fitting this key, Proctor kept in the background. He had picked up the crumpled altar-napkin, and, with one foot on a bench, was now diligently endeavouring to straighten the bit of linen on his knee, with the air of one who is rescuing the property of the church from desecration.

'You must come with me, Father Urquhart, sir,' said the policeman—he was perfectly respectful, and even somewhat compassionate, but after what he had seen and heard, he had not a vestige of belief in the priest's innocence.

Father Urquhart, more dead than alive, looked from one to another, as if for guidance.

'Lead the way, Robson,' said Mr. Blencowe, 'Mr. Vickers and I will go with you—his reverence will take my arm—this charge is preposterous, of course, but it has been made and we must go.'

Seeing no help anywhere under heaven, the priest began slowly to follow whither he was led. His outdoor garments were in the sacristy, and as he and his conductors approached it, its door was suddenly opened, and out streamed half a dozen boys in their fluttering white cottas, bearing tapers to light the altar candles for 'Benediction.' Father Urquhart hid his face in his hands when he saw them, and said, 'The prayer of my Father will not be heard to-night.'

PART III.

ILL news travels fast; a more or less accurate account of what had happened flew round Slagborough in less than an hour, and even made its way to semi-rural Ashdene. A scared maid with a scared face came to inform Mrs. Blencowe that Father Urquhart had been accused of stealing hundreds of pounds of charity money, and dragged off to the police-station by a constable, with all the riff-raff of the place following at their heels. At first, Mrs. Blencowe was much more indignant than alarmed.

'And there was not one single soul to take his reverence's part,' the girl added, 'but Mr. Blencowe and Mr. Vickers, who both went to bail him out.'

'Oh, if my husband is there,' said Mrs. Blencowe joyfully, 'don't be afraid; all will be right.'

In spite of this security, however, in spite, too, of cold and darkness, she threw on some wraps, went out into the dismal wintry garden, and restlessly paced up and down the broad gravel walk by which her husband would return, for the sake of obtaining

ease of mind a few minutes earlier. He was very long in coming; and each time that she had to retrace her steps her anxiety increased. At last she heard the gate into the high road shut, and hastened to meet him. She had hoped that he would see her from afar, and would greet her with the cry, 'It's all right!' but he walked silently, and, as she in her eager impatience thought, very much more slowly than usual, towards her.

'Tell me quickly!' she cried when he came nearer. 'He has explained everything, of course, but I am miserable till I know.'

'You are not more miserable than I am!'

'Do you mean to say that he has not explained?'

'He has explained nothing!—absolutely nothing! It is terrible!'

'Don't speak in that voice, Edward! You don't, you can't believe him guilty.'

'No, I do not believe him guilty, but——'

'But what?' she exclaimed impatiently.

'Why did he not speak out boldly, and to the point? He——'

'Oh, he will—he will! Wait till he does! You will be so sorry afterwards if you let any doubt creep into your mind now. Say that you do not doubt him, Edward.'

'My heart does not, my head does.'

'Impossible!'

'Yes, impossible. But why on earth did he not defend himself properly to-night? If he had been able to rebut the charge, he would surely have done it to-night.'

Mrs. Blencowe made no answer to this, for she was unable to speak.

He kissed her and said, 'I am unhappy too—more unhappy than I can say. In reality, however black things may look, nothing would make me believe this.' And then he thought, 'That money! How little I thought when I marked it in whose possession it would be found!'

'We must hope, Agnes,' he said drearily after a pause.

'I do hope,' she answered boldly; 'I am certain that he will prove his innocence.'

He never did prove it. When tried he had no more to say than when arrested. Proctor's story was clear and convincing, and only too abundantly supported by evidence. The unhappy priest's was exactly the reverse. He was condemned to five years' penal servitude, and Slagborough knew him no more.

Proctor, of course, lived on there in freedom and prosperity. His prosperity dated almost from the hour of Father Urquhart's arrest. How could it be otherwise? Customers poured into his shop daily, and these were not Slagborough people alone, for within a radius of ten or twelve miles there was not a little town that was not 'emptied of its folk' in turn. 'Out of the bowels of the harmless earth,' too, came pit-men on their 'play days,' with pockets full of money which burnt these pockets while it was unspent. One and all, they came even in snow and storm to hear the story of the 'wicked Catholic' priest's misdoings at first hand, and to see the man who had succeeded in bringing him to justice. Ere long Proctor grew rich. He enlarged his premises and grew richer, and yet riches did not seem to gladden his heart. He was a broken-down and most unhappy man. He had ceased to be sacristan, and rarely left his house and shop. This was, however, not because he was oppressed by his conscience and could not bear to face his fellow-creatures, but because the sight of two of them troubled him almost beyond endurance. These two were Mr. and Mrs. Blencowe. Mr. Blencowe always cast his eyes down and refused to see him at all, and Mrs. Blencowe always fixed hers on him, as he thought, searchingly, and he was conscious that he cowered beneath her gaze.

Four years and a half after Father Urquhart's trial, Mrs. Blencowe received the following letter from her husband:—

'No. 27,760, as Father Urquhart is called here, has been ill for the last fortnight, and unable to leave his cell. When at last I obtained an order to see him, I found that this cell was only seven feet long, four feet broad, and eight feet high. He was lying in his wretched hammock, with his eyes fixed on the narrow slip of a window by which all the light he had, entered. This was little enough, but it served to show that he is worn to a shadow, and yet his face, though full of suffering, seemed more beautiful than ever. His hands—my Agnes, if you saw his hands, they are as hard and horny as any poor day labourer's—were lying quietly outside his bed. His eyes brightened when he recognised me. I could not help it, I stooped and kissed him. He knew already that Proctor had on his death-bed confessed his crimes, and was, I think, deeply grateful that his own good name was restored, but not otherwise elated. "I shall try to take you away at once," I said, "and my wife will come to us and help to take care of you." I have found a quiet seaside place close at hand where we can go.'

"You have both been true friends always," he said faintly; "but are you sure that I can leave?" "Quite sure," I answered; "you will receive a free pardon before eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

'*A free pardon!*' he repeated; and though I stayed some minutes longer, and though I explained that this was only the customary formula, he did not say any more. I left him—I had to do so. I will write to you to-morrow.'

Mr. Blencowe did not write next day. He sent a telegram: 'Do not come. Father Urquhart died this morning at dawn.'

MARGARET HUNT.

The Land of Lost Delights.

IN the Land of Lost Delights
 It is always Spring ;
 Shining days and shadowy nights
 Shot with glancing swallow-flights
 And thrushes carolling.

Days that are too short to hold
 All the heart's desire :
 Ships, on seas of silver rolled,
 Heaving sides of gleaming gold
 To the sunset's fire.

Ships that spread their wings and sail
 Very far away
 When the sunset's splendours fail,
 Or when stars grow faint and pale
 At the dawn of day.

Following some flaming star
 Through the unknown seas,
 They shall touch the land afar
 Where the vanished vessels are
 Of all the centuries.

Ships whose crews saw Dido's pyre
 Darken all the heaven,
 Ships that sailed from purple Tyre,
 Barges sweet with lute and lyre
 Out of Egypt driven.

THE LAND OF LOST DELIGHTS.

Galleys set with Roman spears,
Dragons of the Dane,
Corsair craft from dark Algiers,
Barques in which the Buccaneers
Swept the Spanish Main ;

Viking ships that long ago
Left some Northern bay,
Galleons from Mexico,
Swift Feluccas, swart and low,
Junks from far Cathay.

Every dawning sees some ship
Sailing from the shore,
Slow from out the harbour slip,
Down the dim horizon dip,
To return no more.

They shall see them, late or soon,
Countless as the stars,
Where the changeless summer noon
Dreams upon the blue lagoon
Ringed with coral bars.

.
In the land of lost delights
Splendidly we went,
Shining on the windy heights,
When we rode as nameless knights
To the tournament.

Passing maidens lily-fair,
Falcons on their wrists,
Heard the heralds' clarions blare,
Found the fairest smiling there
O'er the clangorous lists.

Lightly laid we lance in rest
At the trumpet's sound,
Bore the bravest and the best,
Blazoned shield and lofty crest,
Crashing to the ground ;

Through the *mêlée* dashed and wheeled
Knights of old renown ;
All the noblest in the field
At our furious onslaught reeled,
Horse and man went down.

So we won the victor's prize,
Bore it to our Queen,
Looked but once into her eyes,
Laughed,—and took the way that lies
Through the forest green.

.

In the land of lost delights,
When the day is done,
Come the long enchanted nights,
Filled with magic sounds and sights
That fly before the sun.

Winter midnights, still and clear,
Pierced by sudden cries,
Striking hearts to rapturous fear ;
While the wild lights flaunt and veer
In the Northern skies ;

Clamorous call of phantom hound
Streams athwart the heaven,
Following night the world around ;—
Sign the cross, it is the sound
Of the whistlers seven.

Nights flower-scented, silver-sweet,
Thrilled with silent wings,
Moonlit glades where fairies meet,
Shining hill-fires where the beat
Of dwarf-hammers rings.

THE LAND OF LOST DELIGHTS

Troops of wild swans trumpeting
Under starry skies'
One that lags on failing wing ;—
Listen low to hear him sing
Ere he sinks and dies.

.

Oh, to find the lost delights,
Sight and scent and song,
Misty valleys, shining heights, .
Golden days and silver nights
We have lost so long !

DUNCAN J. ROBERTSON.

June.

HE walked over the hill, through the heather, singing. And because he felt so utterly happy he sang the song of Love and Death, out of pure human perversity and sentimental delight in imaginary woes—Elaine's song: 'I fain would follow after Love, if that might be.' He knew that for him it was to be; but the contemplation of denial never to be realised made the pleasure of his knowledge the more intense. He sang it over and over again, to the beautiful melody of Blumenthal's composing; and ecstasy seized him as he sang. It was so very good to be alive. Everything seemed to be singing with him. The sun smiled down upon him with the smile of early June, the south-west wind breathed softly upon him with the breath of June, and June was in his limbs, and his eyes, and his brain, and his heart, and his dancing blood, triumphant.

Out over the hill he walked, out over the heather. He had passed from the village street, gleaming white and fresh and happy in the morning light, out through the avenue of limes, out through the oaks and the birches, out through the pines to the fern and the gorse and the bracken, up to the moor, and away over; and it was all glowing with life, healthy and sweet and glorious.

What a morning! What a heart to take out into it! And after what an errand! How could he help singing?

He had hardly dared to hope for a morning such as this. Imagination had painted it dull and misty, uncertain, or even cold and wet and windy. But, like all else to him now, it was glorious.

June, and youth, and success, and love! What more was there for man to desire? And love?—he was going to meet it. It would be waiting for him the other side of the hill, in the sun. He was walking towards the south and the sun to meet love, radiant at his success, waiting for him, beautiful, worshipping, by

the first oak on the southern slope, by the gravel-pit under the brow of the hill.

And in his singing he paused to laugh at the echo roused in his heart by the rattle of the iron wheels last night in the train: Too good to be true! Too good to be true! Too good to be, good to be, good to be true!

Too good to be true? How could it be too good to be true when he had won it, and knew it was reality? And he set off singing again, and swung his arms, and strode along over the sand of the path, blessing and praising God for all of it.

'A grateful heart in owing owes not, but still pays, at once indebted and discharged.' He remembered that, and felt it was true, too. He knew that for the joy of this morning a life's work would be but poor thanks; and he was happy knowing it, for the very knowledge was thanks. He could never thank God enough; but he was happy, and that was the very blessing of God. He was certain of it all. Last night in the train he first realised how happy he was, and how certain of his happiness; even while he lay dozing, and listened to the rattle of the wheels, and planned all to-day's happiness out for himself, and to-morrow's, and the days' and the years' to come.

Oh the joy of the early, misty, June sunrise when he had arrived at the village! The tumbling out of the train, the laughter at the sleepy porter, at the sleepy ostler, at the sleepy maid who showed him to his bedroom at the little inn. All were so sleepy; none could understand the force that kept a soul awake and laughing for pure delight at three in the morning. He had gone to bed, never less like sleeping, to make trial of it, lest he might not be fresh and untired by ten. But he could not sleep: there was too much life in his blood to let him sleep. And after an hour or two's merriment over his own self, because nothing could be ordinary any more, he had risen again, and passed out through the fields to kneel in the dew, and then bathe in the river and make himself utterly clean for the meeting which would crown his joy, at ten. In the river, in the sun, naked and wondering and clean. Thank God for that, too. Ah, the triumph of knowing that! What a pride for the meeting at ten!

Then back through the fields to the village street. He had paused at the church-door, he had rung at a neighbouring house and obtained a key. He had entered there in the morning, and in his happiness had knelt before the altar and prayed God that he

might deserve some of all in store for him—prayed and blessed, and then chanted the whole of the *Te Deum* through, alone there before the altar.

Then he had returned to the inn to reclothe himself, and make himself as fresh and smart as he had every right to do, that he might seem the fitter in her eyes.

Then breakfast! Had he ever enjoyed a meal in his life so much as that country breakfast? Was ever bacon and bread-and-butter and milk so sweet? And then—no, not this morning—no tobacco this morning. That trivial self-denial had set him off laughing again. So trivial, and yet so typical. That first kiss would be sweeter to him also because he knew that to her it was quite pure and sweet. The thought delighted him. What could he not deny himself to be pure for her! How blessed it was to think that he was pure for her! And then he had laughed at himself for his own boyishness and health and spirits, and the people of the inn had laughed, too, because he made merriment by the very light of his face.

An appointment, a present competence and future possibilities, nay probabilities, all but certainties, his now. He had won them by work, work, work—three years' hard work for her, as he had vowed he would do, sitting that summer evening three years ago under the oak by the gravel-pit, with the moon rising calm and full upon seventeen and twenty.

By the gravel-pit from time to time, in sweet holiday intervals, he had renewed his vow, and taken the guerdon from her lips for promises growing towards fulfilment. And now they had been fulfilled, and he was striding, swelling with pride and triumph, to take the reward.

She would be there. In his breast was the letter saying that she would be there, leaving all else unsaid, because no letter writeable could utter it.

What would she say? How would she greet him? How would she look? He pictured her as he strode and sang. She would be sitting, and, seeing him, she would rise; she would stretch out her arms; she would flush; she would circle his neck, and breathe upon him and be his for ever! He took her photograph from his pocket—the photograph that had lightened his labour by the comfort of its poor cardboard against his heart for three years; he took it out, and stopped and gazed upon it under the sun, and kissed it. And, suddenly, with a shriek of joy, he tore it across and across, and scattered the pieces abroad over the heather. Where was the need of that now, any more?

He strode on, singing.

How he had longed for this day! How certain he had been that it would come at last, and yet how he had sometimes feared! He could not help that, just sometimes, being mortal. But how base was all such fear, with the power for life granted him as it had been. He did not fear now; fear had been banished for all time.

The happiest day of his life! He had not lost one moment of it. He had been awake since before sunrise, he would be awake till after sunset. One whole summer day given to the realisation of the best thing in life, not a moment of it lost. Exultation and gratitude in every beat of his pulse, every step, every movement, every thought. Oh the transport of the consciousness of it!

He strode on, singing.

To be happy and to be conscious of it. And yet he had read somewhere that man can never be both; that to be conscious of health is incompatible with health. Could man be only conscious of pain and misery, then? Or was that impossible also? Millions could answer, No. Surely, then, the opposite was not a mere negation. Surely it was absolute and positive, and might be felt and known. He felt and knew it; he was happy; he knew he was happy; since sunrise he had known that he was unspeakably happy. Could he be asked to believe that consequently he was not really happy, that the very knowledge involved a contradiction? What was the value of sun and health, and youth and love, if a man might never know them to be his? All yesterday had been spent in trying to realise this happiness, but in vain. Amid the roar of London and the crowd of gaslights of last evening it was not possible. He had only known that by to-morrow's dawn he would have passed out into the open country, into the brightness of earth and heaven, and that there it would be possible; and he had found it so.

And he strode on, singing.

He passed a labourer digging sand, and his little daughter sat on a heap of stones, with a rag doll cuddled in her arms. The man looked up, and leaned on his shovel to watch the passer-by, and the child gaped open-eyed upon him. He paused again.

'May I have one kiss?' he asked. Open-eyed, the child had given it him before she had time to be frightened. And after it she could not be frightened, but gurgled and crowed at him. He patted her head, he gave her a sovereign, and strode away, singing. And the man wiped the sweat from his brow and blessed him.

Up to the highest point, to the mound of the Government Survey: he must pass up over the highest this morning. The thought of the Government Survey reminded him that he was in his native land, and that was a great and pleasant thought, another thing to be thankful for.

And thence he gazed southwards, and threw his arms forward and greeted the land: the land she looked upon day by day; the land where he had learnt what love and worship meant.

Glowing in the summer haze it lay, meadow and cornfield, and plough-land, and wood, and common, all smiling beneath the sun; from the distant gleaming grey of the chalk downs that hid the sea up to the pinewoods just below him, whose scent was warm and fragrant as a mother's caress.

Then downwards at last, still singing, till he caught sight of her home three hundred feet below, and pulled up again to gloat upon the view. There was the terrace and the lawn; there the flower-beds and the arbour; there the kitchen-garden spread out, all tidiness, in rows, with the gardener bent at work; there the diagram of the slate roofs, and the mass of rhododendrons in flower beyond. Ah! and he could see her mother busy among her rose-trees. He waved his hat to her and passed on, for *she* was not there too. No, she must be nearer to him than that.

Nearer. He left off singing at length, for awe began to mingle with his joy as he drew nearer to the gravel-pit, and his steps grew slower. He could see it now, and the top of the oak beyond, under which—O God! suppose that she was not there—under. Like a spasm the thought came—and passed; for he knew that she would be there. And his awe grew holier and calmer.

Another step, and he would round the corner. He clasped his hands, looking heavenwards, to thank God once again before he passed into the vision of his beatitude. Steady and sure were the sunbeams upon his bared head. That step, and the moss-grown roots of the oak and the bank in the shade were before him.

And on the bank she sat waiting.

Three years' work! What were ten years' work to find her waiting for him thus? And what were all the joys of anticipation beside this of certainty made absolute?

And now, where was the cry of joy, the heart-to-heart rapture of his imagination? Silently she sat and gazed, silently he stood and gazed back upon her, for a full minute—passivity alone was possible to realise the pleasure after all—for a full minute before

he advanced, as if to an altar, and softly lifted the edge of her skirt to kiss it; while she sat and glowed upon him silently, as if the spell might never be broken. She was too sacred to be touched, he too glorious. Twenty and twenty-three, sacred and glorious in each other's eyes—but words, words to show it! There was only one speakable, and that she uttered at length—a single 'Oh!' in a sigh—and pressed her hands together.

Divine, but human too; he might touch her now; and the divinity made human by that 'Oh' was none the less sacred, only the more lovely for being very near. Yet it was timidly that he took her wrists and parted her hands, and bent them down to look upon them and the ring that had bound her faith to his labour since that summer night three years ago. From the light of the sapphire to the light of her eyes he glanced upwards again, and murmured, 'Mine at last!' The answer came: 'Since then, always'; and their tongues were loosened.

He sat on the turf at her feet, and began at the middle, and then at the end, and in the future, and then, because nothing was independent of order of date except his everlasting love, he had to begin all over again, right from the beginning. Then the story grew to mere chronology, and he gave it up, content to sit there and answer questions, drink in her admiration, and exhale his own. She plied him, each answer fresh fuel, fresh fanning to the fire in her eyes: 'And when would he be appointed actually?' 'And how he must have worked!' 'And would he have to live in town?' 'And how many hours a day would it mean?' 'And would he be very tired after it in the evenings?'—endless interrogations and exclamations. Lastly, 'How he must love her!' 'How happy he looked!' 'How happy she was!' 'How happy she would be if she could keep him always so happy!' And because she knew it could not tease him, 'Was he sure he was quite happy?' Brown eyes, beaming consciousness of the possibility of but one reply. Words failed once more, the communion of silence was re-established, the peace and pride of mutual possession enfolded them.

With his finger he traced the delicate pattern of the blue veins over the back of her hand, in rapturous content that a thing so fair should belong to him; while her thoughts were all upon the work of the three years given to win it, and the triumph of the power that could so influence the hero she worshipped.

When could there ever be an end to such happiness? Nothing could take it from them now. There could be no undoing, no

division. Whatever the future, this past would be theirs unalterable, the reality of it never questionable. How could there be an end to that once made perfect? Perfection realised were surely infinite. And as surely this was perfection. The memory of this morning was theirs for all time. So he thought in his boyish ecstasy; but she only knew that she was exalted in her own eyes because he had exalted her, and that she desired to be so always, above all things.

So for a long space they sat silent, until silence in turn grew inexpressive, and they were fain to betake themselves to speech again. But now it was all of the glory of the day, and the fields and the woods, as if they felt they must show their thankfulness to mother-earth for giving them of her best and brightest by praising her, passing on into accounts of the interests at home there in the cottage, of the new-born puppies he was to see and advise concerning (so he could condescend to such matters), of the flowers being bedded-out for the summer, of the chickens, of the villagers' ailments and the school-children's requirements, every now and again lapsing into inconsequence as delight in their love prompted, and then passing on once more to fresh proof of their good-will towards all men and things.

And as they talked on of plans for the help and encouragement of the country-folk round, and considered their toil and patience, he found yet a deeper joy in his happiness than he had known by the direct contemplation of it. Looking aside, he could judge of its brightness the better—the straight vision dazzled him. The gazer on the sun may not see it for long, but he may tell of its beauty all day by gazing on the earth it brightens. He recognised the truth, and acknowledged the lesson. And yet, thought he, when the sun rises we may look for a longer spell without blindness than at midday. It is still dawn for me. So he looked and worshipped, in parentheses, again and again.

'Tinkle, tinkle!' from below; and after a quarter of an hour, that might have been a second or eternity for all they knew, 'Tinkle, tinkle!' up again; and they rose at length, laughing, for it was the dinner-bell. Their morning was over, but they were too content—too rich in the matter of time—to think of a regret on that account. Time was valueless as yet. Still they might not pass away out into the sun from beneath the oak without a seal set upon the blessedness of those few hours. He drew her up with his arm, he raised her to her toe-tips; and yet he had to bend before their lips touched. Was kissing sweeter for the sense

of strength that he held up her weight as he kissed? Was kissing sweeter for the sense of weakness that she yielded her weight to his arm? Strength, and pride in strength, and true, pure love to join them!

He paused, and looked, and kissed again. She unclasped her arms from his neck, and sank blushing before him.

Then away down merrily under the beaming sun.

FREKE VIGGARS.

At the Music Hall.

THE clock was striking eight as I swung open the stage door of the music hall, and passing quickly along the stone floor entered the hall.

The curtain was just up, and two ladies in shabby fair wigs, big black hats, and velvet dresses trimmed with silver, were singing, or rather shouting, through the orchestra, while every now and then the bigger of the two shook her fist at the audience, the other bringing her foot down with a tremendous stamp. This performance was greeted with screams of laughter by the house, who began also to stamp their feet and shout, completely drowning the voices of the singers.

'This way to the ladies' dressing-room,' said the polite barman who was carrying refreshments round; 'straight through the hall and the door at the end.'

Through the iron door into a passage, and down a couple of steps into a room well lighted and very hot, I went. At first sight it seemed nothing but a moving crowd of girls dressed and undressed, and children. There also seemed a perpetual passing of small baskets and portmanteaus backwards and forwards, accompanied by repeated taps at the door, occasioning shrieks of indignant remonstrance from the undressed. Every other minute it was, 'Miss Clarkson,' or 'Miss Russell,' 'books, please,' when that lady declared she wasn't ready, and made a desperate effort to clear a place where she might have a chance of getting into her clothes, hysterically entreating whoever was next her to fix this or pin that if she was to be on that night. Then up she flew upstairs, hot and breathless, and seizing on the stout man seated by the curtain, begged him to call her numbers down the tube to the chairman.

But around this gentleman was a crowd of the importunate, both men and women. 'Here, I say,' calls a tall comedian with a red nose and flat hat under his arm, 'I must go on now. I've

three more halls to do to-night.' 'May I go on, please?' begs a tiny lady in a short frock and sun-bonnet. 'I've waited since eight, and I've such a long way to go home.' 'It's really my turn,' says a big, bouncing serio-comic in an annoyed tone. 'I couldn't help Miss Lloyd being late, and it's my time. Call my numbers down.' 'Oh, I say,' remonstrates a top-boot dancer, 'that's too bad. I'm due at the Washington at 9.10. Put me on first.' All this time someone is dancing or singing on the stage, and tearing every other minute into the wings with a skirt trailing behind them, to rush into another, which is accompanied by muttered execrations to the orchestra for beginning the next symphony, and urgent entreaties to the man at the curtain not to call the number down for a minute, and for the artistes waiting for turns to clear. A poor little lady is frantically trampling an accordion-pleated heliotrope satin under her feet, with another of red silk thrown over her head, and on the verge of hysterical weeping because she has burst the eyes of the bodice and cannot lay hands on a single pin. Another wants a cap or apron and cannot find it, while the man at the curtain is perpetually diving behind his chair and fishing up stray articles of apparel to be owned. As one artist rushes downstairs another flies up. Everyone is in a desperate hurry, and seems to be looking for someone or something. There are repeated knocks at the dressing-room door, and anxious inquiries for missing portmanteaus or baskets, which at last seem to be miraculously unearthed from goodness only knows where. Then someone is always sending for something to drink, and hunting for their glass and getting their beverage drunk in mistake for somebody else's, and *vice versâ*. And all over the room are loud calls for combs and handkerchiefs which can never be found.

Everyone wants to use the looking-glasses and wash their hands at the same moment apparently. Lively skirmishing ensues, and a lengthened argument concerning the opening of the door, which one wants to repeatedly open on various pretexts, and another to have closed.

It is everyone for himself and herself, and the devil take the hindmost.

Every few minutes someone goes away with a bag or basket, and immediately after there is a cry that they must have walked off with something belonging to someone else.

To the new-comer all this is very perplexing, but the music-hall artiste is thoroughly inured to rush and push.

A lady of petite figure and childlike face is engaged in making

up. She daubs red on her cheeks, white on her nose, and blues her eyelids.

'I've usually had a dresser,' she says plaintively, 'but it's so expensive I'm trying to do without. And my dresses cost such a lot with the songs and all. Isn't this a nice wig?' putting on a curly red gold wig whose ringlets reach nearly to her waist. 'I paid three pound ten for it, and I've not earned enough to pay for it yet. I don't think there's much money to be made on the halls, but I only do it for fun.'

She laughs and puts on a big hat with a gorgeous feather.

'My old man doesn't like it. He comes and fetches me home every night. The worst of the profession is that it makes me forget my housekeeping so. I often don't remember whether there's anything for supper or not till I get home. I do hope my baby's all right and that the servant will give her her medicine. I quite forgot to tell her. I came off in such a hurry. But one can't remember everything, and I'd such a little time to get here for the first turn, and of course I was late, and now I don't know when I shall be on. Very likely I shall have to wait till the last turn, and my old man will be so tired and cross. Then he wants to know why I can't give up going on the halls and stay at home in the evening till he gets back; but I'm so dull and miserable by myself all night, I can't. I'd a great business to get on the halls, but he just can't say "no" to me when I've really made up my mind to a thing. So I went and learnt dancing and all, and used to shut myself up in a room trying to do the American twist and the rocks, and clean forget meals and everything else. But I didn't mind as long as I could only get on in my business, and it takes such a lot of working up. I couldn't get on with some teachers I had to bring me out on the halls; the songs were no good, and it was an awful bother. Oh, dear, they've just called me. One feels so brave when somebody else's symphony is being played, but so shaky when it's your own.'

And upstairs she ran, skipped on the stage in an entrancing frock and hat, and murmured through a song in a faint, sweet voice, while a confused murmur of voices went on and clinking of glasses. 'Rap' goes the hammer at the chairman's table every few minutes, while he calls out 'Order!' in a stentorian voice.

A big, stout girl in tumbled cap and apron, and generally untidy appearance, follows, and sings a loud and rowdy song, which she embellishes with a good many knowing winks and smiles.

'Good!' calls the little cockney lad with the threepenny cane

in the front, who has just caught a wink which seemed specially meant for him, and is delighted thereat.

'How do you like my business?' remarks the girl as she comes off. 'I'm trying patter as it goes down, but you've got to pay for it. I'm on by myself for the first time; always had a partner before, but mean to work alone if I can, they're such a bother. The last woman I had was always drunk, so I was obliged to get rid of her, and the one before would go on with three-halfpenny lace on her skirts. Is anybody working for you? I hear there's an agent in front; means to take someone up, I suppose. The new lady that's just come out here I expect, as she seems to have money. It isn't for her business, that's clear. But the agents do want such a lot of treating. It would take about five shillings if I saw him, and I don't suppose I'd get anything for it. And the swell agents won't take any notice of you unless you get a swell with a lot of money at the back of you, and that's the truth.'

'Ladies,' says the new lady alluded to, a tall and elegant girl beautifully dressed, 'will you have some champagne? Do have something—anything you like.'

And she throws over a heavy purse recklessly on to the dressing-table. Glances are exchanged and whispers among the artistes.

'Her purse is full of gold,' whispers a sharp-featured child to her mother eagerly. 'I saw it this evening. I wish we had as much money.'

'Last night,' whispers one girl to another, 'she was half seas over, and nearly fell down on the stage. I wonder the manager didn't speak to her; but there, she's got money, and perhaps paid to come. They say she pays a lot for clappers, and that's why her songs are always applauded.'

The lady loftily ignores the whispering.

'My cab is waiting for me outside,' she says, 'so I cannot wait. Good-night.'

'Do you feel better, my dear?' asks a shabbily-dressed woman who is busy dressing two small acrobats. 'You had a terrible cough last time you was on here.'

The pale girl shakes her head.

'Not much,' she says dubiously. 'I can't dance much now, my heart's so bad. I suppose by rights I oughtn't to be on at all, but I can't stop away, for I've been at it most all my life. You remember I was born in the dressing-room. Maybe I'll die there.'

'Don't get low-spirited, my dear,' remarks a little old woman

without teeth who is meekly waiting on her big daughter, a bouncing serio-comic. 'There's no good in it. My Ada was out weeks, but we didn't get down. There were the boys at tumbling, and that was a comfort. For when you once gets down it ain't easy to get up, and that's what I kep' sayin' to Ada when she took on about it. And if you ain't any heart you may as well chuck the business right off.'

'Some of the turns one gets arn't much,' puts in a bright-faced girl whose sister is undressing her. 'Last Saturday I got an extra turn at a hall up Whitechapel way. A rare business I had to find it too, and when I got there 'twas a free-and-easy, and there was a bit cupboard of a dressing-place with a board along the wall for one's things and a pail of water and soap. On the wall was a notice stuck up, "Artistes are requested to wash their dirty hands before going on.—The Manager," and another about artists misbehaving themselves to forfeit their wages. A woman was on singing and some men in front threw her pennies on to the stage. "Look sharp, you've got to follow her," says the manager, and I tore into my things. There was a lad at a piano and a man with a violin for the orchestra, and a bit of a stage that one couldn't seem to fling round on. I was just tired out and nearly fell in the dancing. I know the man thought I was drunk, but I didn't care. Those as is on there gets about fifteen shillings a week.'

'The halls don't pay unless you get a good many to follow on,' says a tall and refined serio-comic, who is taking off her tights. 'I call it bad when I'm only doing one. There's a good many I know only pay three shillings a night for a turn, and what's that a week? We can't pick and choose as we would, and I've awful distances between my halls this week, but it can't be helped. A fearful draughty place the first, and it's a good thing I always wear double tights or I should be perished.'

A pretty but conceited-looking girl is rating another for tearing her skirts.

'You're awfully careless,' she says sharply. 'Just wait till you get home, my dear, won't aunt give it you, that's all! And you let me go on shameful, with my green skirt showing under the pink one; the manager told me of it upstairs. That's just how it was at the last hall.'

'I couldn't help it,' pleaded the other, half-crying. 'It was all that dreadful orchestra; they rushed me so, and then I caught my foot and all the lace went. I think I shall go back to my

acting again. The halls don't pay me any better, and I seem to have no wind left now.'

'I can't think why you ever left it,' returned the other sarcastically. 'You were never meant to be a music-hall star, that's clear.'

'You see I'm not a beauty,' answers the girl addressed meekly. 'That makes all the difference. Nor the favourite of a song-writer.'

'Hold your tongue, miss,' snaps the beauty angrily.

'I can't see why folk are rushing off the stage on to the music hall,' says a girl who is tying up a bundle. 'It's just their fancy that there's more money in it. We always believe what we know nothing about must be better than our own business. It's a wonderful mistake. I'm not going on for acting because I don't earn much with my singing. Maybe I'd earn less with the other. There's a lot of sketch artistes, and they don't seem to get much to do. I see them sitting in the front sometimes when I'm on.'

'Some sketches pays and others don't,' puts in the stout girl. 'There's too many of them about just now, and too many people of a sort, that's it.'

'Yes, you don't want to be one of a sort,' remarks the serio-comic's mother. 'Your show ought to be out of the way to get on. My girl is reckoned a dancer, but she don't do steps as everyone does, and that's the reason.'

'All ready?' calls the man of the curtain, knocking at the door. 'We want to turn out the gas.'

'Where's my books?' calls a lady angrily. 'That boy hasn't brought them back.'

At that moment the offending boy knocks at the door with said books, to her infinite relief.

'Anyone not been on to-night?' asks a girl.

'No, everyone's had a turn,' answers the man; 'single turns many of them. I never see so many single turns before. But we've got to get them in if we can, and I was right down sorry for the lady as came such a long way last week for a turn and they never put her on at all, not knowing how her business would be. But there's so many turns given, and we can't give everyone an appearance. Seems to me girls are all dying to get on the music hall.'

'Shall I be on next week?' asks the bright-faced girl anxiously.

'Don't ask me, my dear—ask the manager. I expect he wants you down just to see what your business is like, and if that's all right, why he'll put you on regular for a fortnight.'

'There he is. I'll ask him,' says the girl, popping out.

The manager, who is outside the door, is already in conversation with two or three music-hall artistes, who have come round to try and book a show for the next week.

'Very sorry you had only a single turn, my dear,' he remarks to the girl on observing her. 'But you see how it is. We are overdone with people asking for extra turns, and we must put single ones on. And a good many of them would only stand once.'

This in a dry, sarcastic tone.

She coloured.

'Can you put me on next week?' she asked eagerly.

'And me?'

'And me?'

It was a chorus.

The manager put out his hands entreatingly.

'Ladies,' he said, 'I will do what I can, but you see how it is with us. I can promise nothing.'

A general murmur followed.

DOROTHY WALLIS.

The Magic Mirror.

DIM clouds across the field there float,
 And shadows slowly form, combine,
 And gather shape. A tiny boat
 I see, tossed in the foaming brine.
 O rower, wait! Brave rower, stay!
 Nay, boat and rower fade away.

Again the dim clouds gather o'er,
 And slowly shape a battle-field,
 And, dead or living, wounded sore,
 One lies beside a broken shield.
 O warrior, canst thou heed or hear?
 Nay, for the visions disappear.

Fling down the shining surface bare;
 An idle tale it tells to me.
 The shadowy form I image there
 I trace in earth and air and sea.
 Earth, sea, and air, from pole to pole,
 The magic mirror of my soul!

MAY KENDALL.

Within Sound of the Saws.

LUMBER had gone up, and the big mill on the Aspohegan was working overtime.

Through the range of square openings under the eaves the sunlight streamed in steadily upon the strident tumult, the confusion of sun and shadow, within the mill. The air was sweet with the smell of fresh sawdust and clammy with the ooze from great logs just 'yanked' up the dripping slides from the river. One had to pitch his voice with peculiar care to make it audible amid the chaotic din of the saws.

In the middle of the mill worked the 'gang,' a series of upright saws that rose and fell swiftly, cleaving their way with a pulsating, vicious clamour through an endless and sullen procession of logs. Here and there, each with a massive table to itself, hummed the circulars, large and small; and whensoever a deal, or a pile of slabs, was brought in contact with one of the spinning discs, upon the first arching spurt of sawdust spray began a shrieking note, which would run the whole vibrant and intolerable gamut as the saw bit through the fibres from end to end. In the occasional brief moments of comparative silence, when several of the saws would chance to be disengaged at the same instant, might be heard, far down in the lower story of the mill, the grumbling roar of the two great turbine wheels, which, sucking in the tortured water from the sluices, gave life to all the wilderness of cranks and shafts above.

That end of the mill which looked down river stood open, to a height of about seven feet, across the whole of the upper story. From this opening ran a couple of long slanting ways each two feet wide and about a hundred feet in length, raised on trestles. The track of these 'slides,' as they are technically termed, consisted of a series of wooden rollers, along which the deals raced in endless sequence from the saws, to drop with a plunge into a spacious basin, at the lower end of which they were gathered into

rafts. Whenever there was a break in the procession of deals, the rollers would be left spinning briskly with a cheerful murmur. There was also a shorter and steeper 'slide,' diverging to the lumber yard, where clapboards and such light stuff were piled till they could be carted to the distant station.

In former days it had been the easy custom to dump the sawdust into the stream, but the fish-wardens had lately interfered and put a stop to the practice. Now, a tall young fellow, in top boots, grey homespun trousers and blue shirt, was busy carting the sawdust to a swampy hollow near the lower end of the main slides.

Sandy MacPherson was a new hand. Only that morning had he joined the force at the Aspohegan Mill; and every now and then he would pause, remove his battered soft felt from his whitish yellow curls, mop his red forehead, and gaze with a hearty appreciation at the fair landscape spread out beyond the mill. With himself and with the world in general he felt on fairly good terms—an easy frame of mind which would have been much jarred had he been conscious of the fact that from a corner in the upper story of the mill his every movement was watched with a vindictive and ominous interest.

In that corner, close by the head of one of the main slides, stood a table whose presiding genius was a little swinging circular. The circular was tended by a powerful, sombre-visaged, old mill-hand called 'Lije Vandine, whose office it was to trim square the ragged ends of the 'stuff' before it went down the slide. At the very back of the table hummed the saw, like a great hornet; and whenever Vandine got two or three deals in place before him he would grasp a lever above his head, and forward through its narrow slit in the table would dart the little saw, and scream its way in a second through the tough white spruce. Every time he let the saw swing back, Vandine would drop his eyes to the blue-shirted figure below, and his harsh features would work with concentrated fury. These seven years he had been waiting for the day when he should meet Sandy MacPherson face to face.

Seven years before, 'Lije Vandine had been working in one of the mills near St. John, New Brunswick, while his only daughter, Sarah, was living out at service in the city. At this time Sandy MacPherson was employed on the city wharves, and an acquaintance which he formed with the pretty housemaid resulted in a promise of marriage between the two. Vandine and his wife were satisfied with the girl's account of her lover, and the months slipped by

swiftly without their making his acquaintance. Among the fishing and lumbering classes, however, it not seldom happens that betrothal brings with it rather more intimate privileges than propriety could sanction, whence it came to pass that one evening Sarah returned to her parents unexpectedly, having been dismissed from her situation in disgrace. Vandine, though ignorant, was a clear-seeing man, who understood his own class thoroughly; and after his first outburst of wounded indignation he had forgiven and comforted his daughter no less tenderly than her mother had done. He knew perfectly that the girl was no wanton. He went at once into the city, with the intention of fetching Sandy out and covering up the disgrace by an immediate marriage. He visited the wharves, but the young man was not there. With growing apprehension he hastened to his boarding-house, only to learn that MacPherson had left the place and was departing for the States by the next train, having been married the previous evening. The man's pain and fury at this revelation almost choked him, but he mastered himself sufficiently to ask a boy of the house to accompany him to the station and point him out the betrayer. If the train had not gone, he would be in time to avenge his poor girl. The boy, however, took alarm at something in Vandine's face, and led him by a roundabout way, so that just as he drew near the station the Western Express rolled out with increasing speed. On the rear platform stood a laughing young woman bedecked in many colours, and beside her a tall youth with a curly yellow head, whom the boy pointed out as Sandy MacPherson. He was beyond the reach of vengeance for the time. But his features stamped themselves ineffaceably on the avenger's memory. As the latter turned away, to bide his time in grim silence, the young woman on the platform of the car said to her husband, 'I wonder who that was, Sandy, that looked like he was going to run after the cars! Didn't you see? His arms kind o' jerked out, like that; but he didn't start after all. There he goes up the hill, with one pant-leg in his boot. He looked kind of wild. I'm just as glad he didn't get aboard.'

'He's one of your old fellers as you've give the go-by to, I kind of suspicion, Sis,' replied the young man with a laugh. And the train roared into a cutting.

About a year after these events Vandine's wife died, and Vandine thereupon removed, with Sarah and her baby, to the interior of the province, settling down finally at Aspohegan Mills. Here he built himself a small cottage, on a steep slope overlooking the

mill; and here Sarah, by her quiet and self-sacrificing devotion to her father and her child, wiped out the memory of her error and won the warm esteem of the settlement. As for the child, he grew into a handsome, blue-eyed, sturdy boy, whom his grandfather loved with a passionate tenderness intensified by a subtle strain of pity. As year by year his daughter and the boy twined themselves ever closer about his heart, Vandine's hate against the man who had wronged them both kept ever deepening to a keener anguish.

But now at last the day had come. When first he had caught sight of MacPherson in the yard below, the impulse to rush down and throttle him was so tremendous that as he curbed it the blood forsook his face, leaving it the colour of ashes, and for a few seconds he could not tend his saw. Presently, when the yelping little demon was again at work biting across the timbers, the foreman drew near, and Vandine asked him, 'Who's the new hand down yonder?'

'Oh!' said the foreman, leaning a little over the bench to follow Vandine's pointing, 'yon's one Sandy MacPherson, from over on the Kennebec. He's been working in Maine these seven year past, but says he kind of got a hankering after his own country, an' so he's come back. Good hand!'

'That so!' was all Vandine replied.

All the long forenoon, amid the wild, or menacing, or warning, or complaining crescendos and diminuendos of the unresting saws, the man's brain seethed with plans of vengeance. After all these years of waiting he would be satisfied with no common retribution. To merely kill the betrayer would be insufficient. He would wring his soul and quench his manhood with some strange unheard-of horror, ere dealing the final stroke that should rid earth of his presence. Scheme after scheme burned through his mind, and at times his gaunt face would crease itself in a dreadful smile as he pulled the lever that drove his blade through the deals. Finding no plan altogether to his taste, however, he resolved to postpone his revenge till night, at least, that he might have the more time to think it over, and to indulge the luxury of anticipation with realisation so easily within his grasp.

At noon Vandine, muttering to himself, climbed the steep path to the little cottage on the hillside. He ate his dinner in silence, with apparently no perception of what was being set before him. His daughter dared not break in upon this preoccupation. Even his idolised Stevie could win from him no notice, save a smile of

grim triumph that frightened the child. Just as he was leaving the cottage to return to the mill, he saw Sarah start back from the window and sit down suddenly, grasping at her bosom, and blanching to the lips as if she had seen a ghost. Glancing downward to the black road, deep with rotted sawdust, he saw MacPherson passing.

'Who is it?' he asked the girl.

'It's Sandy,' she murmured, flushing scarlet and averting her face.

Her father turned away without a word and started down the hill. Presently the girl remembered that there was something terrifying in the expression of his face as he asked the curt question. With a sudden vague fear rising in her breast she ran to the cottage door.

'Father!' she cried, 'father!' But Vandine paid no heed to her calls, and after a pause she turned back into the room to answer Stevie's demand for a cup of milk.

Along about the middle of the afternoon, while Sandy MacPherson was still carting sawdust, and Vandine tending his circular amid the bewildering din, Stevie and some other children came down to play around the mill.

The favourite amusement with these embryo mill-hands, stream-drivers, and lumbermen was to get on the planks as they emerged from the upper story of the mill, and go careering swiftly and smoothly down the slides, till, just before coming to the final plunge, they would jump off, and fall on the heap of sawdust. This was a game that to strangers looked perilous enough; but there had never been an accident, so at Aspohegan Mills it had outgrown the disapproval of the hands. To Sandy MacPherson, however, it was new, and from time to time he eyed the sport apprehensively. And all the while Vandine glared upon him from his corner in the upper story, and the children raced shouting down the slides, and tumbled with bright laughter into the sawdust.

Among the children none enjoyed more than Stevie this racing down the slides. His mother, looking out of the window on the hillside, saw the merry little figure, bareheaded, the long yellow curls floating out behind him, as he half knelt, half sat on the sliding plank ready to jump off at the proper moment. She had no thought of danger as she resumed her housework. Neither had Stevie. At length it happened, however, that just as he was nearing the end of the descent, an eagle came sailing low overhead, caught the little fellow's eye, and diverted his attention for

a moment. It was the fatal moment. Just as he looked down again, gathering himself to jump, his heart sprang into his throat, and the plank with a sickening lurch plunged into the churning basin. The child's shrill, frightened shriek was not half uttered ere the waters choked it.

Vandine had just let the buzzing little circular slip back into its recess, when he saw MacPherson spring from his cart and dash madly down to the shore.

At the same instant came that shrill cry, so abruptly silenced. Vandine's heart stood still with awful terror—he had recognised the child's voice. In a second he had swung himself down over the scaffolding, alighting on a sawdust heap.

'Hold back the deals!' he yelled in a voice that pierced the din. It was not five seconds ere everyone in the mill seemed to know what had happened. Two men sprang on the slides and checked the stream of deals. Then the great turbines ceased to grumble, and all the clamour of the saws was hushed. The unexpected silence was like a blow, and sickened the nerves.

And meanwhile—Stevie? The plank that bore his weight clinging desperately to it plunged deeper than its fellows, and came up somewhat further from the slide, but not now with Stevie upon it. The child had lost his hold, and when he rose it was only to strike against the bottoms of three or four deals that lay clustered together.

This, though apparently fatal, was in reality the child's salvation, for during the half or three-quarters of a minute that intervened before the slides could be stopped, the great planks kept dropping and plunging and crashing about him; and had it not been for those very timbers that cut him off from the air he was choking to breathe, he would have been crushed and battered out of all human semblance in a second. As it was, ere he had time to suffocate, MacPherson was on the spot.

In an instant the young man's heavy boots were kicked off, and without pausing to count the odds, which were hideously against him, he sprang into the chaos of whirling timbers. All about him pounded the falling deals, then ceased, just as he made a clean dive beneath that little cluster that covered Stevie. As Vandine reached the shore and was casting desperate glances over the basin in search of some clue to guide his plunge, MacPherson reappeared at the other side of the deals, and Stevie's yellow curls were floating over his shoulder. The young man clung rather faintly to the supporting planks as if he had

overstrained himself; and two or three hands, who had already shoved off a 'bateau,' pushed out and picked him up with his burden.

Torn by a convulsion of fiercely antagonised feelings, Vandine sat down on the edge of the bank and waited stupidly. About the same moment Sarah looked out of the cottage door in wonder to see why the mill had stopped so suddenly.

In all his dreams Vandine had never dreamed of such chance as that his enemy should deserve his gratitude. In his nature there had grown up one thing stronger than his thirst for vengeance, and that one thing was his love for Stevie. In spite of himself, and indeed to his furious self-scorn, he found his heart warming strangely to the man who, at deadliest risk, had saved the life of his darling. At the same time he was conscious of a fresh sense of injury. A bitter resentment throbbed up in his bewildered bosom, to think that MacPherson should thus have robbed him of the sweets of that revenge he had so long anticipated. The first clear realisation that came to him was that, though he must kill the man who had wronged his girl, he would nevertheless be tortured with remorse for ever after. A moment more, and—as he saw Sandy step out of the 'bateau' with the boy, now sobbing feebly, in his arms—he knew that his vengeance had been made for ever impossible. He longed fiercely to grasp the fellow's hand, and make some poor attempt to thank him. But he mastered the impulse—Sarah must not be forgotten. He strode down the bank. One of the hands had taken Stevie, and MacPherson was leaning against a pile of boards panting for breath. Vandine stepped up to him, his fingers twitching, and struck him a furious blow across the mouth with his open hand. Then he turned aside, snatched Stevie to his bosom, and started up the bank. Before going two paces, however, he paused, as if oppressed by the utter stillness that followed his astounding act. Bending a strange look on the young man, he said, in a voice as harsh as the saw's:

'I was going to kill you to-night, Sandy MacPherson. But now after this day's work of yours, I guess yer safe from me from this out.' He shut his mouth with a snap, and strode up through the piles of sawdust toward the cottage on the hill.

As for MacPherson, he was dumbfounded. Though no boaster, he knew he had done a magnificently heroic thing, and to get his mouth slapped for it was an exigency which he did not know what to do with. He had staggered against the boards from the force of the stroke, but it had not occurred to him to resent it, though

ordinarily he was hot-blooded and quick in a quarrel. He stared about him sheepishly, bewildered and abashed, and unspeakably aggrieved. In the faces of the millhands who were gathered about him he found no solution of the mystery. They looked as astonished as himself, and almost equally hot and ashamed. Presently he ejaculated, 'Well, I swan!' Then one of the men who had taken out the 'bateau' and picked him up found voice.

'I'll be gosh-darned ef that ain't the damndest,' said he slowly. 'Why, so, I'd thought as how he was agoin' right down on his prayer-handles to ye. That there kid is the apple of his eye.'

'An' he was sot on killin' me to-night, was he?' murmured MacPherson in deepest wonderment. 'What might his name be, anyhow?'

'Lije Vandine,' spoke up another of the hands. 'An' that's his grandchild, Stevie. I reckon he must have a powerful grudge agin you, Sandy, or he'd never a' acted that way.'

MacPherson's face had grown serious and dignified. 'Is the boy's father and mother livin'?' he inquired.

'Sarah Vandine's living with the old man,' answered the foreman, 'and as fine a girl as there'll be in Aspohegan. Don't know anything about the lad's father, nor don't want to. The man that'd treat a girl like Sarah Vandine that way—hangin's too good for 'im.'

MacPherson's face flushed crimson, and he dropped his eyes.

'Boys,' said he huskily, 'ef 'Lije Vandine had a' served me as he intended, I guess as how I'd have only got my deserts. I reckon as how *I'm* the little lad's father!'

The hands stared at each other. Nothing could make them forget what MacPherson had just done. They were all daring and ready in emergency, but each man felt that he would have thought twice before jumping into the basin when the deals were running on the slides. The foreman could have bitten his tongue out for what he had just said. He tried to mend matters.

'I wouldn't have thought you was that sort of a man, to judge from what I've just seen o' you,' he explained. 'Anyhow, I reckon you've more'n made up this day for the wrong you done when you was younger. But Sarah Vandine's as good a girl as they make, an' I don't hardly see how you could a' served her that trick.'

A certain asperity grew in the foreman's voice as he thought of it; for, as his wife used to say, he 'set a great store by 'Lije's girl, not havin' no daughter of his own.'

'It was lies as done it, boys,' said MacPherson. 'As for *whose* lies, why *that* ain't neither here nor there, now—an' she as did the mischief's dead and buried—and before she died she told me all about it. That was last winter—of the grippe—and I tell you I've felt bad about Sarah ever since. An' to think the little lad's mine! *Boys*, but ain't he a beauty?' And Sandy's face began to beam with satisfaction at the thought.

By this time all the hands looked gratified at the turn affairs were, to them, so plainly taking. Everyone returned to work, the foreman remarking aside to a chum, 'I reckon Sarah's all right.' And in a minute or two the saws were once more shrieking their way through the logs and slabs and deals.

On the following morning, as 'Lije Vandine tended his vicious little circular, he found its teeth needed resetting. They had been tried by a lot of knotty timber. He unshipped the saw and took it to the foreman. While he was waiting for the latter to get him another saw, Sandy MacPherson came up. With a strong effort Vandine restrained himself from holding out his hand in grateful greeting. There was a lull in the uproar, the men forgetting to feed their saws as they watched the interview. Sandy's voice was heard all over the mill.

'Lije Vandine, I saved the little lad's life, an' *that* counts for *something*; but I know right well I ain't got no right to expect you or Sarah ever to say a kind word to me. But I swear, so help me God, I hadn't no sort of idee what I was doin'. My wife died las' winter, over on the Kennebec, an' afore she died she told me everything—as I'd take it kindly ef you'd let *me* tell *you*, more particular, another time. An' as I was wantin' to say now, I'd take it kind ef you'd let me go up along to your place this evenin', and maybe Sarah'd let me just talk to the boy a little. Ef so be ez I could persuade her by-and-by to forget an' forgive—and you'd trust me after what I'd done—I'd lay out to marry her the minute she'd say the word, fur there ain't no other woman I've ever set such store by as I do now by her. An' then ther's Stevie——'

'Stevie and the lass hez both got a good home,' interrupted Vandine roughly.

'n I wouldn't want a better for 'em,' exclaimed MacPherson eagerly, catching the train of the old man's thought. 'What I'd want would be, ef maybe you'd let me come in along with them and you.'

By this time Vandine had got his new saw, and he turned away without replying. Sandy followed him a few paces, and then

turned back dejectedly to attend his own circular—he having been moved into the mill that morning. All the hands looked at him in sympathy, and many were the ingenious backwoods oaths which were muttered after Vandine for his ugliness. The old man paid little heed, however, to the tide of unpopularity that was rising about him. Probably, absorbed in his own thoughts, he was utterly unaware of it. All morning long he swung and fed his circular, and when the horn blew for twelve his mind was made up. In the sudden stillness he strode over to the place where MacPherson worked, and said in a voice of affected carelessness—

‘You better come along an’ have a bite o’ dinner with us, Sandy. You’ll be kinder expected, I reckon, for Stevie’s powerful anxious to see you.’

Sandy grabbed his coat and went along.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

At the Sign of the Ship.

ALAS, we should never employ the figure of Irony. The last *Ship* was consecrated to a brief treatise on *Practical Jokes*. It seemed an essay calculated, as far as it had any moral influence, to bring practical jokes into contempt, for their arrant dulness, cruelty, and cowardice. But a lady writes, and not from Scotland, to complain of 'this foolish article.' It 'puts mischief into young people's heads,' for example. If young people did not know all that mischief before, and a great deal of additional iniquity, I am very much in error. Sir Walter Scott's artificial ghost may be new, but then anything of Scott's is classical; besides, the joke is rather difficult. 'The broadcast sowing of undesirable information' held nothing else that was not familiar to the most inconceivably ordinary intelligence. However, the lady cannot pass on that *Ship* to her village reading-room; and village morals, so far, are uncorrupted by us. Probably the good villagers could add a few more practical jokes to our little collections: if the lady would make inquiries, she might find some rural examples, not necessarily for publication.

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Why does mankind lie so fearfully about Mr. R. L. Stevenson? I have long ceased to be agitated by reports that he is on the point of death. Wolf has been cried rather too frequently; but why? The latest fiction averred that the Robinson Crusoe of Samoa, as Mr. Frederic Harrison calls him, with the opera-glasses and kid gloves—as visionary as the guillotine with which Mr. Matthew Arnold saw Mr. Harrison practising in the back garden—was on his way to England. Now he is not on his way to England at all; he is 'in a better place,' but he has sent over his *Island Nights' Entertainments* (Cassell's). The first story, the 'Beach of Falesa,' seems far the best of Mr. Stevenson's works on the South Seas. The hero is a wonderful example of the common untutored

Englishman, adrift in these summer isles of Eden. His contempt for the better-bred and more agreeable Kanakas is exactly right, yet he is far more sympathetic than M. Pierre Loti's sentimental mariners. He keeps his troth, and marries the island beauty, instead of loving and sailing away, and leaving her on the parish. Of all Mr. Stevenson's infrequent petticoats, Uma is the most natural, womanlike, and charming. We all fall in love with the brave, honest, beautiful little lady. The whole picture of heathendom, muddled by competing Christians sects, adding a Catholic gesture to Protestant dogmas, is quite new, and seems no less true. That islanders should poach fish with dynamite, and have their hands blown off by the matches of dishonest traders, is sorry news to a sportsman and a friend of his species. The islands are being civilised, as usual, at the wrong end. However, the tale, so dramatically told by the hero, is a pearl among tales. The two other stories are not quite so successful, at least among sophisticated reading people; in the islands they are sure to have had a favourable audience. Among other new books, one notices Mr. Watson's *Excursions in Criticism*. They are very earnest excursions. Mr. Watson thinks that Charles Lamb and Mr. Swinburne have much exaggerated the merits of Ford and Webster. No praise of *The Broken Heart* can well seem exaggerated to myself; the horrors of *The Duchess of Malfi* are, perhaps, too far beyond the vein of Mrs. Radcliffe for a polite taste. Mr. Watson need hardly trouble himself as to Keats's opinion of the people who print his less excellent letters, his love letters, his various readings. *Non est tanti*; the soul of a poet like Keats is beyond being annoyed because ghouls are ghoulish, or even by Mr. Watson's remark, that there was a touch of 'Arry in that Apollo, the most unkindest cut of all. Mr. Watson's dialogue with Dr. Johnson, in which the Doctor criticises Mr. Rossetti on Johnsonian principles, is excellent. The great sage would have said these very words, and would have been perfectly just in his sayings: that is, as far as the sonnets which he censures are concerned. A few more of these dialogues of the dead, bringing poetry back to common sense, would be welcome. A good example is De Foe's criticism of 'Mr. Milton' in his *History of the Devil*. De Foe's remarks are sometimes both fair and funny, when Milton deals with perfectly impossible topics in the career of Satan. The common sense is undeniable, but there is a good deal in poetry of which common sense is not the best criterion. Still, the young poet, at all events, must not hastily assume that he is inspired because he writes

nonsense. 'Your moderns,' says Mr. Watson's Dr. Johnson, 'take to themselves vast credit for mere variety of numbers. Any man, by simply willing it, can bring himself to write in a variety of measures. Yes, sir,' the dictator goes on, 'Browning could read men. The pity is, men cannot read Browning.' Ladies can do so, however, as they often assure us, if we chance to admire any other poet. Mr. Browning seems occasionally to be the only poet they have read. This is too exclusive.

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The papers announce a recent attempt to shoot a mermaid in the Orkneys. The shore she haunted was well known, and the local sportsmen went out with guns. This is no way to investigate a mermaid. The Psychical Society do not try to bag a ghost when they hear of one. The plan is to send a handsome young Orcadian to the mermaid's cave and then to hear from him what happened, as far as he may honourably divulge the course of events. In 'The Beach of Falesa,' Mr. Stevenson gives an account of dangerous beautiful mermaids, and what he says tallies with what a Highlander once told me at Loch Awe, concerning the danger of love affairs with the spiritual women of the wilds. This, of course, is unpromising for the handsome young Orcadian, who is the right person to conduct researches about mermaids. As, in general opinion, mermaids in the Orkneys appear in seal skins—not jackets, of course, but disguised as seals—it is just possible that the mermaid now being hunted for is a common seal after all. Seal-shooting is poor sport. The creatures are so pleasant and kindly, so human, as one watches them playing and sunning themselves on the rocks, that, in any case, one hopes that the mermaid will escape. Orkney seems full of legends. A correspondent sends a good one of a Lowland factor who had the bones of some old warriors excavated and thrown on the fields as manure. In the night my correspondent's authority, then a boy, saw one of the men employed in the work get up, walk in his sleep about the room, and go through the action of recovering objects from the ground and placing them in a bag. Next day the factor reversed his order and had the bones re-buried. It is surmised that he, like the workman, suffered much from the dead warriors in a dream.

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Perhaps Miss Cox's volume on *Cinderella* (Nutt), containing some three hundred versions of the tale, has already been mentioned in

these notes. The endeavour to tabulate the statistics, and get some information out of them, is rather toilsome. So far, as a beginning, one sees that Cinderella's fairy godmother, as her protector, is very rare indeed. The protector may be a ghost, a brownie, a fish, a goat, a sheep, a cow, a cat, a dog, a tree, oak, lime, hazel, a tree-spirit, an old woman, and a number of other things and people, but she is commonly Cinderella's dead mother. The dead mother may have died a natural death, or may have been turned into an animal and then killed. Other stories, like the beginning of *Beauty and the Beast*, the humble present desired by the good daughter, and, again, the tale of 'Little Three Eyes,' and, once more, *Puss in Boots*, are frequently mixed into *Cinderella*. So is *Les Fées*, or *Toads and Pearls*. A cow which spins comes in Portugal, Corsica, Sicily, Italy, Servia, Bulgaria, Moravia. Food fallen from a beast's ear, or horn, is found among Kaffirs, Scotch, in Norway, Sweden, Zealand, Finland, Brittany, Slavonia. Thus we seem to see a distinct difference of taste and version between North and South. Again, a wild version, in which the sisters *eat* their mother, who helps Cinderella as she does not taste the unholy meal, appears to be peculiar to Greece and the Levant. Sometimes Cinderella is a boy—Cinderellus, so to speak. But the general outline of the tale, including the shoe, only very rarely a ring or a glove, remains little altered, wherever the legend occurs. There are, of course, many races whose fairy tales we do not know, and we can come to no very fixed conclusions while this is the case. *Cinderella* is not nearly so well known among African and American tribes as some other popular tales. We only have one glimpse of it among the ancients, the story of the slipper of Rhodopis carried to the king by a bird, as in a few forms of *Cinderella*. Perhaps the examination of *Cinderella* statistics will lead to nothing very remarkable. The oldest-looking form is that in which the heroine is actually the daughter of a sheep. This occurs in Gaelic. But the fact may be a mere blunder of the narrator's, who had heard of the mother changed into a sheep, and confused the legend. The helpfulness of animals and of trees is very marked, and is an idea of old religions, but that we knew before. If all the best fairy tales were treated as Miss Cox has treated *Cinderella*, then we were fortunate; but the labour is only equalled by the unpopularity of the task, which makes its admirable execution all the more meritorious. The method of statistics is, no doubt, the nearest to a scientific method which we can adopt, but it is excessively fatiguing. Then so many deduc-

tions have to be made that the original home of *Cinderella* looks as if it would never be discovered. If the tale were not extremely old, it could not be so very widely spread in the peasant class before reading and writing were common. In Australia songs and set dances (corroborees) are systematically diffused across the continent by special messengers, who travel under safe-conducts. But we never hear of tales being disseminated in that formal manner. They cannot have travelled very quickly from Finland to Annam; many centuries, we may imagine, were needed for the process. Miss Cox's researches make it plain that, when Madame d'Aulnoy wrote *Finette Cendron*, she did not arbitrarily combine *Hop o' My Thumb* and *Cinderella*, as one had fancied, but followed a version which occurs, here and there, up and down the world. In fact, various Cinderellas are mixed with a number of other tales, but the shoe reconciles them all, and stamps them as being rather Cinderella than anything else.

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A common misfortune of the bad golfer is hitting the ball on the heel, 'back of' the face of the club. To remedy this, if possible, Mr. Anderson, of Edinburgh, has made, but I think has not yet published, patent clubs and cleeks, with the shaft in the middle, not at one side of the head. They look very odd, but the cleek is said to drive wonderfully, and not to damage the green so much as the ordinary article. The club is a still more queer object to behold—how it drives I have not heard. But no patents will overcome natural vices of style. If the heel of my club were the centre of the face, then I could drive; but a change of form of club would only lead me to make some new blunder. A really bad golfer is not to be cured. I believe we are possessed by some brownie or imp—as soon as one is cast out another takes his place. And their name is Legion. Happily, the quite hopeless player is rare, and even he is eternally hopeful. It is his partners who despair of him.

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Mark Twain also is among the prophets. In his 1,000,000*l.* *Banknote* he republishes his article on 'Mental Telegraphy.' It is not always easy for a poor islander to be quite certain when Mark is in earnest; however, he certainly invented 'Mental Telegraphy' before 'Telepathy' was a phrase known to psychical

research. But nobody would publish his discovery that mind can communicate with mind across space, without signs or writing, in 1878. We have advanced, backwards some people will say, and telepathy may be discussed without shame. Mark's own cases, his idea that a friend in San Francisco should write a certain book, that book having, three hours earlier, been projected by the friend, whose letter would have crossed Mark's, if Mark had posted his, perhaps hardly rises above a chance coincidence. The same sort of thing once occurred to myself. On the seashore at St. Andrews I thought of writing an essay or tale, 'From the Ghost's Point of View.' In a few days I came to London, and met the author of *Vice Versâ*. I was beginning to tell him about my notion, when he said that it had also just occurred to him, and that he had it down in his note-book, under the title 'From the Ghost's Point of View.' We wrote a tale of that name together, and published it in a magazine far from popular, and now, I think, dead. But we could not absolutely establish the coincidence of date, as I keep no note-book. Mark says that 'such elaborate accidents' as his 'cannot happen. Chance might have duplicated one or two of the details, but she would have broken down on the rest.' Yet he gives cases of two persons writing, practically, and at the same time, the same novel. Mr. Howells and a lady unnamed are mentioned as instances. In another, the names even of the leading characters were the same. Surely this is mere accident, yet chance did not break down. Mark ingeniously accounts for the common feeling of recurrence, of having been in a given situation before, by mental telegraphy. Some stranger is telegraphing to us an experience of his own. We get it at second hand. Scott complains of having been terribly haunted by this feeling one day, but his brain was then on the point of breaking down, and he had written about fifty pages of a novel in the morning. Probably the sensation of reminiscence arises from a weakness in realising facts. You have to catch them, as it were, and then grip them securely; they make a blurred and double impact on the consciousness. Mark 'smokes a good deal—that is to say, all the time,' and I fear tobacco begets the queer reminiscences which haunted Shelley. Moreover Mark frankly gives a case in which he was asleep for about a minute, standing, and in broad daylight, whereby he fancied he saw an apparition. But this apparition was of flesh and blood. However, the anecdote is really a case, not of apparition, but of disappearance, which is just as curious, and not so

common. When one comes to think of it, it is just as strange that a ghost should disappear, as that it should appear. How is it managed? Out of three ghosts which I have viewed, none disappeared, all went past, or round the corner, and I did not know they were ghosts till later circumstances made that theory highly probable, if not precisely capable of exact demonstration. One of them certainly was not anybody, could not have been, but was in a dress different from the dress actually worn at the moment by the living person of whom it was the phantom. If we may sleep suddenly for a minute, we may dream in that minute; but how is one to know one was asleep? Some cases of contradictory evidence may have arisen from these queer psychological conditions. A seer may be in for perjury with the best desire to tell the truth. Take Mark's case; he would have sworn to a brief alibi once, but he would have been forsworn.

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For scientific reasons I have been obliged to investigate the 'manifestations' at Rerrick in 1696. They were of the rapping, stone-throwing, noisy kind, with one apparition of a small white hand, with fire-balls, and so on. The account of them, by the minister of the parish, Mr. Telfair, is as clear, copiously attested, and businesslike as may be. The clergy prayed, fasts were held, and so forth, but no imposture was discovered, as far as we know. But a correspondent who has very kindly made some local inquiries says that the country people now absolutely scout the bogie. One night, they say, nothing occurred, and a disappointed inquirer remarked, 'The bogle canna get here for the spate,' or flood. Perhaps tradition knows that some discovery of fraud was made; it is curious that fragments of evidence should still be floating about, after two hundred years. But when old women at Rerrick, near the ruins of Dundrennan Abbey, are apt to scout the local ghost, ghosts must be in a bad way. The robust spectre tore down the wall of a cottage, and threw a stone trough weighing three stone at a man, whom it hit but did not hurt. So says Mr. Telfair, and adds the names of eye-witnesses.

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To the Song in the last *Ship* the initials H. C. should have been appended.

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IVY AND ROSES.

RONDEAU REDOUBLÉ.

We twine a wreath,—of ivy 'tis, and roses;
 And sweet, so sweet is she, and fair her face.
 She whispers, as my hand each spray disposes,
 'Let me twine in this rose, the gloom to grace.'

'For in this climbing spray methinks I trace
 Your dreams of fame, vain as the wind that blows is,
 Ungraced of flowers; but if, in happier case
 We twine a wreath, of ivy 'tis—and roses.'

'And if,' said I, 'this spray my life discloses,
 You and the rose, sweet maid, are of one race;
 For shy is she, and pure as the brook that flows is,
 And sweet, so sweet is she, and fair her face.'

'Ah! that the selfsame hand might interlace
 With flowers my life, that cold as winter snows is!'
 No more she twines, no word, my doubts to chase,
 She whispers, as my hand each spray disposes.

'See, love, my wreath, when your sweet hand reposes,
 When never a rose the gloomy leaves embrace.'
 And soft she whispers, red as the rose that grows is,
 'Let me twine in this rose, the gloom to grace.'

What way were sweeter than the way she chose is
 Her own sweet bloom upon my heart to place?
 And so, of our two lives, a little space,
 Until the winter all our twining closes,
 We twine a wreath.

ALBERT G. LATHAM.

ANDREW LANG.

